

**THE ARAB'S PLACE
IN THE SUN**



"The Arabs are the heirs of the ages; and to-day—chuplag naked as a new-born babe."

THE ARAB'S PLACE IN THE SUN

BY
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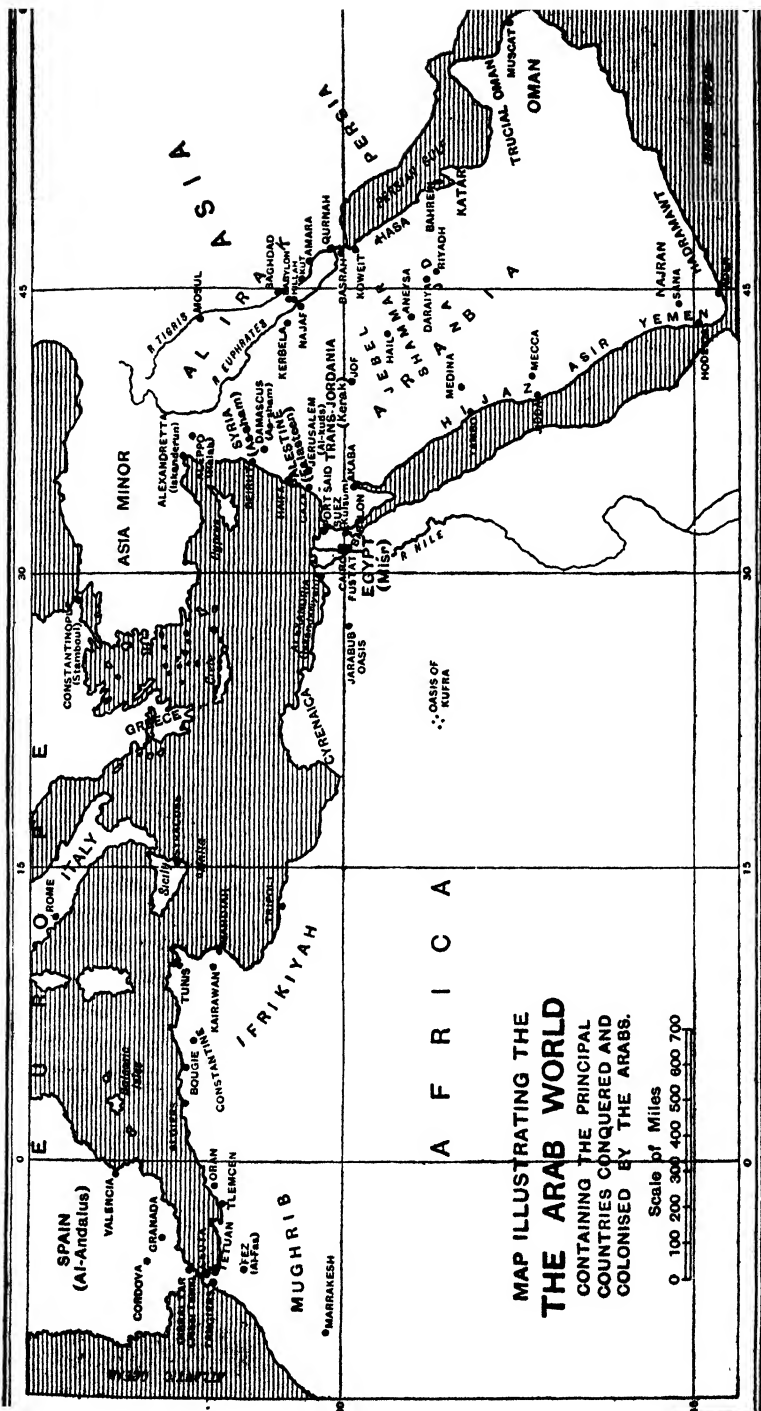
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It was the evening of a very hot day in Suq ash-Shuykh in 1905. All around croaked the frogs, from across the river came the sound of the Sabæan anvils, some boatmen passed up towards Nasiriyah chanting as they poled their *mabala*. I was sitting on a bench on the river-front with Hamid Pasha, the Turkish commandant who had been sent to forestall a possible uprising on the part of the Beni Hachcham. Hamid Pasha was in *negligé*—his skull cap, his long white tunic, his slippers—and Hamid Pasha was disgusted. Suddenly he turned to me and said: "Allah," and then he paused while his hookah gurgled fiercely, "Allah one day decided to visit the world He had made. He came to Frangistan and said: 'Did I make this land?' 'Yes,' said Gabriel, 'but the Franks have unlocked the secrets. Thou didst put in mountain and valley, in river and stream, and have made the land what Thou didst intend it to be.' Then he came to America and said: 'Nor do I recognize this land.' 'Because,' said Gabriel, 'the Americans have worked and striven until this land is no more like its first estate than the flower is like the seed.' And so Allah passed through the earth, and everywhere He saw that things had grown and become beautiful and men had become wise and strong. At last he came to Irak. 'This,' exclaimed He, 'is Irak! I know it, it is just as it left My hand—the Irakis have done nothing with all the treasures I put there, nor used the secrets I cunningly laid there.' Wallah!" said Hamid Pasha. "So is the Iraki. Lest he presume to improve on the Almighty, he says 'In sha Allah!' and goes to sleep." I tried to remind Hamid Pasha of the civilizations that had risen and flourished and gone again. "But you only prove my point," said he. "The Arabs are the heirs of the ages; and to-day—*chiplaq*, naked as a new-born babe."

THE REV. JOHN VAN ESS
in *Historical Mesopotamia*.

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the visible political results of "the war to make the world safe for democracy" was the liberation (in theory at any rate) of a number of subject races, whose acquisition at second-hand of the vaguer doctrines of nineteenth century nationalism had resulted in their becoming more or less of a permanent menace to their nominal masters, and something of a nuisance to the world at large. The deciding factor in this was the automatic collapse of the old Austrian and Turkish Empires which the end of the war brought about; but the unrest caused by "the minorities" in these and other imperial organizations had formed such a persistent feature of world politics for so many years past that it is reasonable to suppose that, even had the war ended differently, their hopes of eventual independence would hardly have been quelled completely.

Of the races freed to assume, or resume, an independent national career, none bears so distinguished a past, none presents a more pitiful present, none offers so intriguing a future, as the Arab. It is possible to sympathize with the national aspirations of the small Balkan peoples, of the Poles, the Albanians, the Armenians or the Irish, but actually their eventual fate will exercise very little real effect on the great world outside. With the Arabs, one ventures to suggest, it is far otherwise. Ragged, wild, merely "romantic" people as they seem on the surface to the unobservant Western public, they will be seen on closer contact to hold cards in their hands which put them in a position to command the serious attention of the world. They stand to-day, as they have stood throughout history, astride a great artery of world trade, an artery moreover which modern developments in road and air transport are continually making more important. By whatever means a direct connection is attempted between Europe and India

and mid-Asia, by the Suez Canal, by the land route through Turkey, Irak and Persia, or by the air route through north-east Africa, Egypt and Irak, Arab territory will be crossed and Arab or Arabicized people encountered. Hence the importance of the Arab connection to Great Britain, and the inevitability of the intertwining of British and Arab destiny ever since the day when British merchants began to feel their way towards an overland route to the East, over a hundred years ago.

That is the geographical justification for the claim of Arab importance ; but there are others as well. The Arabs possess the prestige which always accrues to a race associated with the birth of a great religion. Like their cousins the Jews, they are essentially a people of a Church ; a Church which has become world-wide, and which has gained for them the respect and consideration of millions. For Islam, the religion of the Arabs, has followers the world over, and none of them, of whatever race or clime, can forget that the Prophet Muhammad was an Arab, and that the Arabs are his people. Moreover, the Arabs are heirs to the lands and traditions of the ancient peoples who, owing to the romantic power of the Bible and other Semitic holy books, still exercise an indirect but powerful influence on modern thought and culture. They challenge the historian and the social observer by the spectacle of an Imperial race which, fallen from power, has managed to survive, in a fashion almost unique, both greatness and decay. The Assyrians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Mongols were and are not ; the Arabs remain, probably differing but slightly either in physique or mind from their ancestors of centuries ago, living examples of a race which has undergone almost all possible varieties of national experience and yet refused to die. And lastly the Arab possesses the peculiar gift of personality—to be seen most obviously in the West in the modern English—which enables him to instil into his neighbour a desire to copy him, to base his fashions in clothes and social habits, even his outlook on life, on his. Just as Western nations of the present day tend to copy English life, even when they actively dislike the English themselves, so did the Arabs at the zenith of their power

find loyal admirers of their habits through the whole Near and Middle East. Alien people like the Turks, who despised the Arabs, yet became permeated with Arabian social habits ; bitter enemies like the Berbers ended by becoming so thoroughly arabicized that to-day in North Africa they are indistinguishable from their former masters and foes except to the expert eye. This same process can even now be watched in actual evolution among races more recently converted to Islam, the Arabian religion ; the Malays, for example. Such a rare and valuable talent is alone sufficient to make the Arab, politically speaking, a personage distinctly worth watching.

Although recent events have placed the Arabs themselves almost entirely in the power of Great Britain, it may be doubted whether the general scope of the Arab problem and the position occupied by Britain in the Arab scheme of things are as yet very clearly realized by the British public ; and this must stand as the excuse for the writing of this book, which seeks to put before the reader a plain, unvarnished account of the Arabs, of who they are, of what they have done in the past, and of where they stand in the present. The Arab cause suffers so far as the Western public is concerned in being largely at the mercy of two opposing schools of publicists : the specialist and the romantic, or what one might term the " highbrow " and the " lowbrow." The highbrow tends to become, by a gradual and indefinable process, so arabicized himself that his language and his statements are all but unintelligible to everyone but brother specialists ; he may be found in full bloom in the numerous little societies and " circles " which have been formed in London since the war to discuss Middle Eastern affairs. The lowbrow plays upon the interest that always attaches itself to nomads in the minds of civilized and over-civilized people, and either entertains by picturesque, amusing and often inaccurate descriptions of Arab life in town or desert, or resuscitates the old novelette theme of the " he-man " in Arab tribal dress. Thus the real Arab, when he wishes to plead his cause before the tribunal of Europe, is faced with the initial disadvantage of having to live down a wholly fanciful picture of himself, created largely in California and

North Africa, and faithfully accepted in Mayfair and Streatham.¹ It may be urged, and with some show of truth, that since Arab problems, in so far as they affect Great Britain, will always be dealt with largely by experts, and since these experts are well equipped to deal with them, it does not matter very much what "the people" think or know about them. The answer to this surely is that in a complete democracy like modern England, it is of urgent importance that at least a proportion of citizens in every class should take a personal interest in the overseas politics of Britain, and in the history and present fortunes of the races who form, either nominally or actually, a part of the British Empire. Not that the present writer has, in urging the Arab's claim to a place in the sun, any desire to air a pet scheme of his own, or to press for an immediate solution of an extremely intricate and many-sided problem. The Arab is unique among subject races, in that his great past as a colonizer and the tremendous influence which the spread of Islam bestowed upon him have led to him leaving, so to speak, traces of himself in many different parts of the world. In the process of founding a world religion and of winning and losing a great empire, he got himself inextricably bound up with the destinies of a score of other peoples, so that were a perfectly ideal settlement of Arab claims possible, it would still be difficult to adjudicate between him and his neighbour and to ascertain his just rights. Whether or no the Arabs have been, or are being, quite fairly treated by Europe is a point which must be left finally to the judgment of the reader, and of the general public; it does not lie within the scope of those Englishmen who, by long personal association with the Arabs and after many personal favours received at their hands, have forfeited the claim to complete impartiality. But a friend may argue as advocate even if he may not act as judge; and if the author, taking as his

¹ A visiting Arab diplomat, invited not long ago to a smart London dinner, was somewhat surprised to be addressed by the lady he took in to dinner in the following terms: "Oh, I am so interested to meet you! Tell me, are you really a shaikh? It must be thrilling to live far off in the desert, and have as many wives as you want!" The gentleman in question lives in a large city, goes to his office in the morning on the tram, and is the faithful husband of one wife, and father of several sons.

background such authenticated facts of Arab history as are accepted as standard, ventures now to argue the Arab case, it is chiefly in the hope of arousing the reader's interest in a singularly fascinating people, a people of violent highlights both in their virtues and their failings, a people that having known both extraordinary success in the worldly sense, and also failure, humiliation and despair, have yet remained very human withal ; a people whose ups and downs in history make so remarkable a picture that it may be truly said of them, as of no other modern nation, that they "are the heirs of the ages and to-day—*chiplaq* naked as a new-born babe."

PART I
IN THE PAST

CHAPTER I

THE ARAB AT HOME

FEW races of mankind have succeeded in spreading themselves about over so wide an area of the world as the Arabs, and few races have given their language and culture to so many peoples not of their own kith and kin. It has followed as a consequence of this colonizing talent that numbers of human beings are to-day spoken of as Arabs who have ethnologically no right to the name, but who, having adopted the Arabic language and Arabian manners and customs, are taken for Arabs by the outside world.

Strictly speaking, the Arabs or Arabians are a Semitic race whose home country is the large peninsula of Arabia, situated at the south-west corner of Asia and adjacent to Africa. It is possible—the point is not yet proved—that Arabia was the primitive home of all the Semitic races and the starting point of Semitic culture, in which case the Sumerians, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Carthaginians and the Jews could all be classed technically as "Arabs." The country has been claimed, perhaps justly, as the real scene of many of the Old Testament episodes, and it seems certain that the earlier Jewish authorities recognized their kinskip to its inhabitants. The Semitic peoples are marked out from the rest of mankind by distinct physical and intellectual characteristics; of the latter, two of the most noticeable are a talent for religion amounting almost to genius (in the religious sphere the whole western world is still under the Semitic sway), and a pride of race which tends to keep their appearance, their mental outlook and their activities remarkably constant from generation to generation, and age to age.

In addition to being the proper name of a nation, however, the word "Arab" has been used from very early times

in a secondary sense, to denote a certain distinct type of human being; the wanderer or "bedouin" (the latter being a corruption of an Arabic word meaning, of the *beddah* or open country), as distinct from the settler. Our English use of the phrase "street Arabs" has this sense; we do not mean that the little boys concerned are Arabs by race, but wanderers and drifters by nature. In the same way, town-dwelling and settled Arabs of the present day frequently refer to the desert tribesmen, and even to the country peasants, derisively as "Arabs," reserving for themselves descriptive adjectives of their own towns; Baghdadis (men of Baghdad), Shammis (men of Damascus), Misris (men of Cairo), and so on. This use of the word is at least as old as the Old Testament,¹ where, indeed, the national significance is not to be identified with certainty except in the later books. The actual derivation of the name has been much disputed, though it probably in the earlier Semitic usage simply meant "desert"; the inhabitants gradually coming to draw their name from the element in which they were found. One English authority, however, connects it with *gharb*, the Arabic word for "West," which, written in Arabic type, has a very similar appearance.² In this case the nation might have gained their name owing to their country's situation on the west of the old (Asiatic) world; in the same way that Arabs of to-day always speak of north Africans as *Mughribin* or "Westerners," because in the old days of Arab expansion Morocco formed the most westerly province of the Empire. Mention of the Arabs as a people is, however, found as early as the Assyrian inscriptions of the ninth century (two Arab queens were, at different times, captives of the Assyrian power), and occurs in the later Old Testament books.³ There were, according to Æschylus, Arabs in the army of Xerxes,⁴ and they are described at fair length by Herodotus,⁵ whose Jewish contemporary, Nehemiah, also had dealings with them.⁶ Xenophon gave

¹ Cp., for instance, Isaiah xxi, 13.

² Rawlinson, G.; Notes to Herodotus; Vol. II, p. 71.

³ As, for instance, 2 Chron. xxi, 16; xxii, 1; Ezekiel, xxvii, 21.

⁴ Æschylus, "Persians," 316.

⁵ Herodotus, History, vii, 691.

⁶ Nehemiah, iv, 7; vi, 16.

the name "Arabia" to an area which included not only the peninsula, but Palestine and southern Syria as well.¹ The designation "Saracen," adopted by later Greek and Latin authors, and copied from them by modern Europeans, may owe its origin to a single place or tribe; Ptolemy mentions "Sarakene" as a district.² Individual Arab rulers or States enter occasionally into old records, such as the visit of the Queen of Sheba, or Saba, to King Solomon, and the Babylonian inscription which refers to a king of Megan, possibly to be identified with Ma'an, a close rival of Saba. Adnan, the Ishmaelite, and the traditional ancestor of the North Arabian group of tribes, is said to have been defeated in the field by Nebuchadnezzar. Almost nothing is known, however, of early Arabian history, and it has little or no importance for the Arab of historical times, or of to-day. It is definitely recognized, however, that there was a highly-developed and flourishing civilization in south Arabia at a very early date, sufficiently powerful to influence other nations; the Greeks, for instance, may have borrowed some of their gods from this source, and even certain letters of their alphabet. In the New Testament, the word "Arabian" is used chiefly to denote the Nabatæans, a then flourishing people to the north of Arabia proper, certainly of Semitic origin, but perhaps not actually Arabs.³

Arabia itself is an irregular parallelogram, bounded on the north by the Syrian desert and its two flanking countries of Syria and Irak, or Mesopotamia; on the south by the Indian Ocean; on the east by the Persian Gulf, and on the west by the Red Sea. It contains over a million square miles of territory, and is thus rather more than eight times as large as the British Isles, and half as big as the United States. It consists of a central tableland surrounded by a desert belt, stony on the north and sandy on the flanks. Perhaps as much as a fifth of it is cultivated; the rest, owing to the scanty rainfall and lack of moisture, is irreclaimable. Large areas, however, afford very fine pasture at certain seasons of the year, and Arabia has always been famed for her breeds

¹ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, vii, 8; 25.

² Ptolemy, v. 10.

³ As: Gal. i, 17; iv, 25. 2 Cor. xi, 32.

of camels, horses and sheep. An interesting scheme has been under discussion of recent years between Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, the leading Arab prince of to-day, and a well-known European engineering group for the reclamation of more oases in the desert by means of artesian wells. Such a scheme, if successful, might change the face of Arabia. For the present, however, the country remains what it has always been in historical times, a huge waste inhabited by a comparatively minute population of quick-witted, prolific and highly-intelligent people, differing entirely from other nomad races living under similar conditions by their great practical ability and taste for affairs. Some authorities consider that Arabia is the victim of continuous desiccation, which means that many wells and rivers formerly functioning are now dried up. It follows that the population is probably smaller to-day than it has ever been. The country enjoys the so-called "Continental climate," varying from great heat to extreme cold ; parts of it are unbearable in the summer, even to the Arabs, and in other parts winter snow is by no means uncommon. In many ways, climatic and geographical, it resembles a smaller Africa. It is usually known to the Arabs themselves as the *Jezirat al-Arab*, or Island of the Arabs, the Arabic language making no distinction between an island and a peninsula.

The Arabs claim descent from two distinct strains, taken as corresponding to, and explaining, the division which has always existed in historic times between the Arabs of the north (whose ancestor is given as Adnan, a descendant of Ismail or Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar), and the Arabs of the south, or Yemen. Expert European opinion is divided on this point, some authorities agreeing with the Arabs, others holding that the division is an artificial one, probably started, and certainly fostered, for political ends. By many Arab writers the northern or Ishmaelitish Arabs are not recognized as true Arabs at all, but only as arabicized newcomers. The Yemenis or southerners are variously derived either from Abraham through their forebear Kahtan (identified for this purpose with the Biblical Yoktan); or from the aboriginal tribes of Ad, Thamud and Imlik or Amalek, the latter said also to be

the ancestor of the Berbers. The Bible, it may be noted, claims apparently four main divisions of the inhabitants of Arabia : Yoktanites, Ishmaelites, Keturites, and the little sister nations of the Amalekites, Moabites, Edomites and Ammonites. Little reliability can, however, be placed on any of these traditional origins, which are too remote and obscure to permit of scientific criticism ; the important point is that the division into northerners and southerners, whatever its origin, is definitely accepted by the Arabs themselves, and has played a very prominent part in their history. Undoubtedly, too, there has been in Arabia for many centuries a considerable amount of foreign blood, African in the south, Asiatic and European in the north. The Arabs, like many other races priding themselves on their breeding, are in reality by no means pure-bred ; but in their case their racial pride and extraordinary tenacity of tradition has enabled them to escape the usual effects of a dilution of the national stock.

Even before the time of the Prophet—with whom, for our purpose, Arabian history may be said to begin—there were many Yemenite tribes already to be found in the north, and a few Ishmaelite in the south. Migration from south to north had been much heavier, a feature explained by the decline in prosperity of the former region, a decline traditionally connected with the bursting of the great dam at Marib ; the old civilizations of Saba and Ma'an were probably well on the way to final decay by the beginning of our era. They must have suffered heavily by the decline in the trade in incense, which had been used in enormous quantities by the old pagan religions of Babylonia, and had formed one of their most profitable exports. The tradition of the "spices of Araby," which has even come down to us at the present day, shows how important this trade must once have been.

The basis of Arab national life has always been, and is to-day, the tribe. Though the tribes appear to the outsider as permanent units, resembling little States within a State, they are in fact always in a condition of flux or movement, and vary both in composition and influence from century to century. Many once world-famous tribes are now either

extinct, or occupy a position so humble as to be negligible. The great name of Kuraish, for example, borne at the time of the Prophet by the autocrats of Mecca, is now claimed by an insignificant collection of poverty-stricken shepherds in the Hijaz. (The innumerable *sharifs* and *sayids* scattered all over the Muslim world—descendants of the Prophet through the lines of Hassan and Hosein respectively—are, of course, by descent of the Kuraish, though they have long lost any connection with tribal Arab life.) The Tai, once so powerful that foreigners often applied the name to the whole Arab nation, now form a little subsidiary group of the Shammar, once a sub-tribe of themselves. The tribe, in fact, occupies much the same position in the Arab hegemony that the great families of nobles and gentry occupied in later mediæval Europe, and it is subject to the same general laws. In the beginning the work of some able and ambitious individual, it must continue to breed leaders of the same type or surrender its position to a more successful rival. Life in the desert is cruel ; there is no room for failure or misfit. Most tribes grow out of single families ; the founder is usually not only a remarkable leader and a clever diplomatist, as the desert regards diplomacy, but a good family man, a good " breeder." Hence the paramount importance in the Arab's eyes of a large family of sons, for they possess direct political value. They may be made the nucleus of a new sub-tribal unit which in the course of time may succeed in asserting itself in its own neighbourhood, in which case it will soon be joined by deserters from other and less successful clans, who will bring their families and hail its head as their *Shaikh* or Elder.¹ Gradually a new tribe will emerge, either under the name of the founder, or with some artificial designation taken from a near-by place or animal. The love of political change, innate in the Arab, is increased by the uncertain basis of his economic life, dependent as it is upon the vagaries of climate and of foreign markets. This uncertainty is made more pronounced by the institution of the *ghazu* or tribal raid, which forms the national sport of the

Lit., " Old man," and frequently found in this sense in literature ; as, in the Arabic version of the well-known Gospel phrase ; Kaif youlad al-insan wa huwa shaikh—How can a man be born when he is old ?

Arab, but is unquestionably responsible for keeping him rather poorer than he really need be.

As success, and continued success, is a crucial matter for the tribal community, it follows that the shaikh must emphatically be a man of marked ability. There is no room for the inefficient leader ; the Arab has no objection to the hereditary principle as such, but the sons have got to be at least as good as their fathers. Directly the shaikhly strain shows signs of becoming a little thin, the tribesman will, in his own interests, watch for an opportunity of deserting the family and either installing another shaikh or going off to another tribe. It follows that, although the shaikh's authority is paramount and autocratic, it is limited very positively by considerations of his own safety and self-interest. A single false step may compromise him ; a series might prove fatal. The shaikh is no royal personage, leaning for his authority upon the God-given inheritance of superior caste, and demanding loyalty as a right. He has the power of life and death, but only as a *primus inter pares* ; his practical and liberty-loving followers would never grant him more. Hereditary kingship, or aristocracy as an ideal in itself, is foreign to the Arab mentality ; even the greatest of the Caliphs never rested very securely on their thrones, and the office was always, in theory at least, elective. This impatience of mediocrity in their leaders, this refusal to knuckle down to anybody but the better man, is one of the causes of the strange lack of stability and continuity in Arab history. Another cause is the lack of veneration for political institutions as such (perhaps due to the strong spiritual or "other-worldly" feeling which is characteristic of all Semites) ; and still another is the difficulty of instilling into the Arab a sense of loyalty for any unit larger than the tribe. For his tribe the Arab has as warm an affection as the European for his family ; for the nation his feelings are tepid and indifferent. He may in his heart of hearts regard another Arab as definitely superior to a man of another race ; but this will not inspire him with any great wish to co-operate with him for joint national ends. This noticeable weakness has been fostered by the vast distances of Arabia, and the consequent difficulties of communi-

cation ; but the constant tribal feuds, and especially the great rift between northerner and southerner, have also played their part.

At the time of the coming of the Prophet, in the early seventh century of our era, many great tribes had already disappeared to everything but tradition, and of those that remained there were several large groups, the divisions between which were clearly defined. Three of these belonged to the Ishmaelites or North Arabs, known respectively from their eponymous ancestors as the Modar, the Rabi'a and the Iyadh. (These names represent the traditional sons of Nizar, who was himself a grandson of Adnan, and thus a descendant of Ishmael.) The Iyadh, after a stormy career, passed early from the scene and left no important branches. Of the Modar, the most famous tribe is the Kais Ailan, which played a big part in the building-up of the Arab Empire ; it had numerous branches, such as the Hawazin (among which are counted the once prominent Hilal and Kilab, and the present-day Ugail and Muntafik in Irak), the Adwan, the Sulaim and the Ghatafan. Other leading Modari tribes are the Tamim ; the Asad ; and the Kinana, best known by their off-shoot the Kuraish, the tribe of the Prophet himself. Of the Rabi'a group of tribes, the most celebrated have been the Bakr ; the Abdul Kais ; and in modern times the Anaza, who came into prominence in the eighteenth century, and still remain masters of the Syrian desert.

Of the South Arabian tribes, the chief ones to gain prominence were the Lakhm (founders of the kingdom of Hira in Irak) ; the Hamdan ; the Tai, with their off-shoot, the Shammar ; and the Azd, who had several important branches. One of them was the Ghazzan, who before the time of the Prophet ruled a border principality in Palestine under the suzerainty of the Roman Empire ; another was the Khuza'a, who once held Mecca until their power was broken by the Kuraish ; two others were the Aws and the Khazraj, who played a part in world history as the *Ansar* or "Helpers" of the Prophet.

One important collection of tribes forms a kind of group of its own, owing to its disputed origin. This is the Kuda'a,

who claimed themselves to be Yemenis, but who frequently inter-married with Northern tribes, especially the Modar, and are often claimed by interested poets for the Northern group. The chief importance of the Kuda'a lies in the great part played in the early days of the Empire by their off-shoot the Kalb, who, by their inter-marriage with the Ummeyad Caliphs, secured a very powerful position. It was, in fact, the rivalry between the Kalb and the Kais Ailan which undermined the power of the Ummeyyads, and led indirectly to the dissolution of the Empire. Other branches of the Kuda'a were the Salih (predecessors of the Kalb as emigrants to Syria in the days before the Prophet); the Tanukh; the Juhaina; and the Bali. Large bodies of the latter, who had made themselves a menace to the holy cities, were removed by the Caliph Omar to Egypt, whence they spread all over North Africa; many African bedouins of the present day claim descent from them. The Kalb had a well-known branch, the Beni Udhra, who were famous in literature for their depth of passion.

In addition to the great tribal groups, there were (and still are) in Arabia several small tribes, such as the Hutaim, the Shererat and the Suleib, who are not regarded by the Arabs as of true descent.¹ They lead isolated lives, and play little or no part in the history of the country. It has to be remembered that many of the genealogies of the great tribes are doubtful, and some are purely legendary; but they are generally accepted by the Arabs themselves, and are, therefore, for our purpose quite accurate enough. The conquests which followed the death of the Prophet, by dispersing men from the different tribes all over the newly-won territory, profoundly modified the tribal arrangement of the motherland, and the decay and disappearance of some of the most famous tribes begins at this time.

In the years just previous to the coming of the Prophet, which mark the final and almost the only view that we get of the old Arabian society, we find the country split up into a number of petty principalities, each one under the control

¹ For these outcast tribes in modern times, see Doughty, "Arabia Deserta," i, 280; Philby, "The Heart of Arabia," i, 267; Amin Rihani, "Ibn Sa'ud of Arabia," 199.

of a dominant tribe. The decay of the south since the collapse of the old Sabæan and Minæan civilizations has been rendered more acute by later Abyssinian and Persian invasions, against which, however, the native inhabitants have recently been successfully asserting themselves. Large tracts of the Yemen and of the south and east coasts still remain under Persian domination, though they are actually ruled by native families. In the far north, the two buffer States of Hira and Ghassan, themselves made up of Arabs, have been allowed to fall into decay by the carelessness of their suzerains, the Roman and Persian empires. Some of the Arab tribes have already penetrated far afield to the northern Syrian desert, and even into northern Syria and Mesopotamia. The Bakr are already settled in the tract of country named after them Diyarbakr, and the Kalb have obtained control of Palmyra and its profitable caravan traffic. The latter tribe, like the Ghassan, have also become Christians. On the Arabs in touch with Syria the influence of Christianity had been continuous since the very early days of the faith. Arabs were present at the Day of Pentecost¹; and many early saints, like St. Simon Stylites, are known to have had close personal connection with the Arabs, and may themselves have been of Arab blood. Christianity had also penetrated to the south of Arabia, perhaps through the Abyssinian influence; it was centred in Najran. Its history and extent are uncertain, but Christian names such as Abdul Masih ("Servant of the Messiah") occur among the princes of some southern tribes. It was subject at one epoch to ferocious persecution by the local Jews. Men of the latter faith were at this time spread over the whole peninsula. For the rest, the indigenous religion of the Arabs took the form of a kind of refined worship of the elements, especially the stars, visualized in the shape of rude images and fetishes such as stones, etc. The right and duty of pilgrimage (*haj*) played a great part in their religious ideas, just as it did with the Jews; also they shared the Hebrew conception that it was meritorious to pray with the face in a certain direction. Life, on the whole, was very barbarous. Inter-tribal war was continuous, being suspended only by general agreement

¹ Acts, ii, 11.

in the four sacred months of the year, in one of which fell the annual pilgrimage. Blood vendettas were constant, and even in the execution of religious rites there was much that was savage and crude. It is probable that at the time the people had lost all clear idea of the exact relationship of their gods to themselves. They obeyed the dictates of the local cult because it was a habit of generations, but they did not attempt to look deeper. With a few men, however, the original natural objects upon which the personalities of the gods were first founded had given way to a more spiritual conception, which was vaguely and gradually finding itself. These men, afterwards known by the generic name of *hanif*¹ were groping in the wide field of religious experience and speculation, searching for a common ground for their religious conceptions and for the workings of nature which they noticed around them. Some of these thinkers had come under Jewish and Christian influence, without actually adopting either of the two faiths ; some lived definitely ascetic lives, probably in imitation of the Christian monks.

For some reason of which we are ignorant, the religious heart of the country had come to be placed in the town of Mecca, a small settlement in a barren valley, destitute either of agriculture or industry, but enjoying in recent times a considerable commercial prosperity owing to the growing importance of the east-west caravan route across Arabia, due to the disturbance in the old Euphrates and Tigris route by the constant wars between the Romans and the Persians. The town, whose origin was, and is, unknown, stood round a well of brackish water (the afterwards celebrated Zemzem), and contained in its centre a small building of a rectangular plan, known as the Ka'aba or Cube, in which were placed many of the images of the gods. In its wall, too, was the famous Black Stone, possibly of volcanic origin, which had obtained a tremendous hold on the imaginations of the fetish-worshipping Arabs. So great was the veneration for Mecca, the "place nearest Heaven," that even the vindictive tribesmen refused to shed blood in its

¹ Later used in the Koran constantly for the followers of the true, primitive worship of God ; especially Abraham. Cp. the Koran iii, 89 ; x, 105 ; xxii, 32 ; and many other passages.

vicinity ; and every year, during one of the pilgrimage months, a large fair was held in the neighbourhood, at which one of the principal attractions was a contest between the poets and singers of various tribes. This fair acted as a kind of national forum, and was attended by traders and pleasure seekers from all parts ; it was the one institution in Arabia, except Mecca itself, which might be regarded as truly national. It helped to increase the prestige of Mecca, which, in spite of the fact that there were many other holy places in Arabia, and possibly even one for each tribe, was sufficient to give it a definitely metropolitan position. Thus the tribe controlling it enjoyed a peculiar advantage, which was further enhanced by the rapid growth of the wealth of the city after the development of the caravan route lying through it. The rise of the Kuraish to this enviable position occurred in the sixth century, under a chieftain named Kusay, who displaced the Khuza'a, who had previously held the headship of Mecca. Two of Kusay's grandchildren, named Hashim and Abd Shams, have a special importance, since the former is the forebear of the Hashimite family from whom the Prophet sprang, and the latter is the father of Ummeya, the founder of the famous Ummeyyad house. By the time of the Prophet, the Ummeyyads shared with another Kuraishi family, the Makhsum (not descended from Kusay), the reputation of being the wealthiest and most influential of all the Meccans ; the Hashimites, though honourable, were not too well provided with this world's goods. They held, however, some high official positions ; two of the Prophet's uncles, Abu Talib and Abbas (the former the father of Ali, and the latter the forebear of the Abbassid house), were responsible for the feeding of the pilgrims who came in crowds to attend the annual *haj*.

Thus Mecca formed a rough kind of capital for a nation of nomadic tribesmen, retaining little or no memory of what had once been great Arabian civilizations in the south, in the main barbarous, but with some pretensions to organizing power, and advanced enough to defer to national law in cases where (as in the *haj*) its observance was a proved necessity. To culture or the arts the people possessed no

pretensions, except in one direction, the gift for speech and song. Religion, poetry and war formed the great pastimes of this clever but limited and poverty-stricken race. Little except the small ripples caused in religious circles by the speculations of the *hanifs*, seemed to suggest much chance of progress. Local politics were about on a level with those of wild African tribes ; social life and habits hardly to be distinguished from those of primitive peoples everywhere. To the impartial eye of a Martian observer, coldly looking down upon our earth about the year of grace 600, few peoples might have seemed less ready for a great future, less worthy of a mighty destiny, than this obscure and quarrelsome race of wandering tribesmen, with little else to recommend them but their good looks and their love of poetry and fine phrases. Yet in under half a century these same Arabs were to overturn the two most powerful nations in the world, found a mighty empire stretching from the Indus to the Atlantic, and establish a new religion, a new mental outlook, a new code of behaviour so powerful in their influence as to produce what is still recognizable thirteen centuries after the event as a new and highly individual type of man.

CHAPTER II

THE PATH OF EMPIRE

THE pivot on which Arabian history turns is the ministry of the Prophet Muhammad. Like their cousins the Jews, the Arabs were linked irrevocably by destiny and the needs of the Semitic temperament to the fortunes of a great religion. Islam and its founder dominate the outlook, the private life, the future hopes of the Arabs as completely to-day as they have for thirteen centuries. The strange, compelling figure of the Prophet, seeming to some beholders stern, grasping, unscrupulous and sinister, to others gentle, kindly, just and far-seeing, holds the scene now as easily as when his *Caliphs* or "Successors" ruled half the world, or when, in that still earlier time, he himself was still alive to direct the affairs of the *juma'a* or congregation. It is conceivable that the Arab rise to power might have taken place independently of Islam, and without the spur of the Prophet's life and example ; but such a consideration has only the interest of a theoretical speculation. Actually, the Arabs burst upon the world as members of a national theocracy as rigid in everything but theory as that of the ancient Jewish tribes, and the foundation of this theocracy, on its political as well as its religious side, was the work of Muhammad. In setting out to lead his people to the Kingdom of God, he actually led them to a worldly career of dazzling splendour which he could not have foreseen and might not have approved ; of such are the contradictions of history.

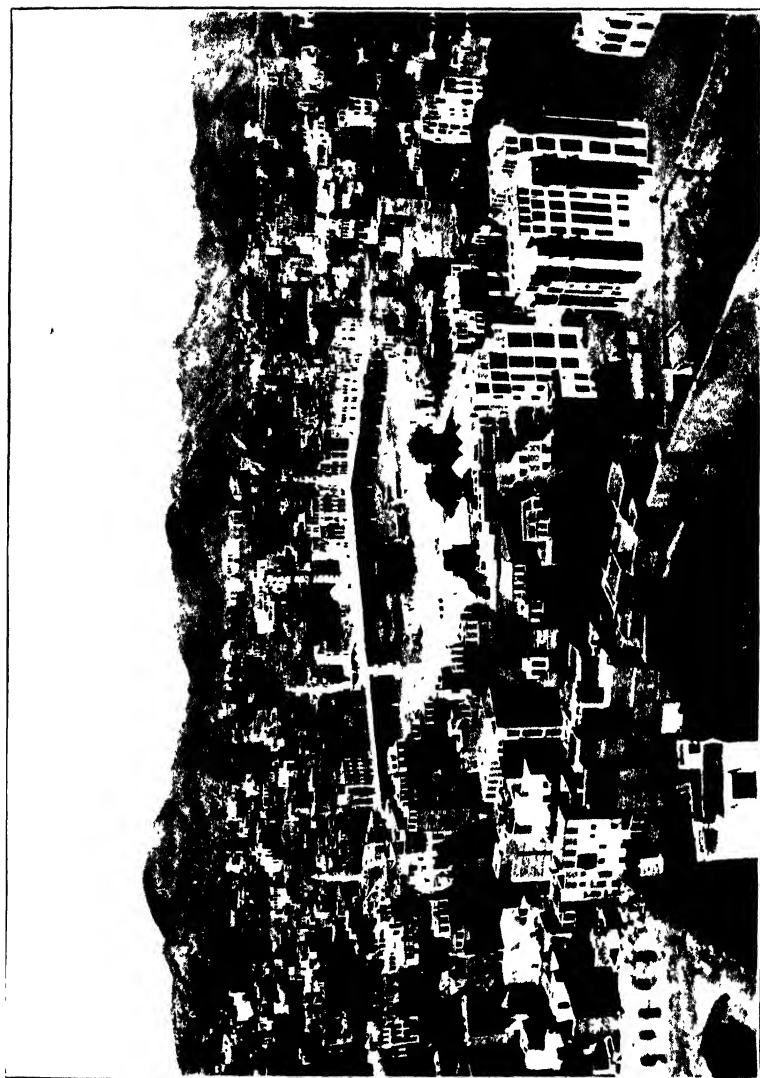
We are concerned here with the Prophet as an administrator and practical politician, and need not, therefore, pause to discuss either his teachings or his character. Few figures in history have caused so much discussion, or have led careful and sober historians to such totally different

conclusions.¹ All that need be noted here is that Muhammad belongs essentially to the tradition of the active, legislating prophet, as exemplified in the Old Testament figures of Moses, David and Nehemiah, and not to the ranks of the philosophic religious teachers, of the type of Jesus, Buddha, Confucius or Socrates. He was not concerned with speculation on individual human character, with the inner workings of the spirit ; he saw only the necessity of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, he visualized a Day of Judgment so urgent that men must be made to prepare for it. He was essentially, by temperament, a revivalist. Further, it has to be noted that his activity as a great national leader grew out of his religious vocation, and not vice versa. It was because Muhammad so passionately believed in God that he gained the strength to do what he did ; he was a prophet first and foremost, a political leader and organizer only secondarily. Though an Arab of the Arabs, a man of the Kuraish with all the traditional love for his tribe, yet he was ready to throw over home and fellow tribesmen at the bidding of an inner religious conviction. His new faith was to break down the barriers of tribe, even of nationality ; a Persian convert was one of the earliest military advisers, a black African slave his first official *muedhin* or caller-to-prayer. It is this combination of strong inner conviction and deep love for his erring countrymen which formed the basis of the Prophet's influence, and made him the power that he became. He was firm as a rock on principles, but always ready to compromise on inessentials ; the Arabs must accept Islam, throw away their idols, abolish the savage customs of infanticide and blood vendetta, and definitely recognize the supreme authority of God and His Messenger in all things, temporal as well as spiritual ; but they might retain their ancient customs, circumcision, the pilgrimage, the reverence for the holy city and the Ka'aba, and a modified form of polygamy.

Thus the creation of the Arab Empire was not an

¹ For an account of the Prophet from a Christian and antagonistic standpoint, see Sir William Muir's well-known "Life" ; from a Muslim and sympathetic standpoint, the chapters on Muhammad in Sayid Amir Ali's "The Spirit of Islam." Gibbon's account, written from a detached point of view, forms, in spite of some small inaccuracies, a very able summing-up.

original conception on the part of the Prophet or his immediate followers ; it followed, inevitably but without being deliberately willed, upon his success as a religious propagandist. Under the peculiar conditions in which the new religion came into being, it was obliged to fight for itself or go under ; and its success on the battle-field led to the creation of a new political entity, necessarily and automatically. Church and State were one, because the Church had called the State into being. Thus the extraordinary expansion which followed was due less to design than to circumstance, skilfully exploited by the brilliant military and administrative talents which the new times revealed among the Arabs, and particularly among the Kuraish. The astonishing ease with which the inhabitants of an obscure desert city suddenly adapted themselves to positions of world-wide responsibility has frequently been commented upon ; but actually the Kuraish had been, unknown to themselves, in training for some such eventuality for several generations past. Their position as the principal citizens of Mecca had made them, owing to its recent progress as a centre of international caravan trade, familiar with the risks, the usages and the responsibilities of long-distance commerce, than which no better school for practical administrators exists. The Meccan merchants, born and bred to the work of financing enterprises, discounting bills and corresponding with business men in far-off countries, were just the people to grasp the many advantages which the new religion, once established, had to offer them. True, they fought against it sturdily while it was still an unproved novelty, as good business men frequently will ; but once convinced of its practical use and, above all, imbued with the certainty that Muhammad's determination must finally bring him out on the winning side, they were not slow to seize the positions within the pale to which their natural abilities entitled them. Hence arose the paradox, so disturbing to the piety of later ages, by which Kuraishi families like the Ummeyyads who had been numbered in the beginning among the most bitter enemies of the new religion, eventually reaped the greatest material rewards from its success.



MODERN MECCA:

The Kaaba is seen in the centre of the mosque courtyard.

The events just previous to the birth and mission of the Prophet are somewhat obscure. As happens invariably with the great figures of religion, the environment and early life of the real man have become obscured in a mass of unreliable tradition and pious fabrication, greatly assisted in this case by the fact that the Arabs of the time were not accustomed to the keeping of written records ; we have, in fact, to go on nearly a century before we reach the earliest of the Muslim historians. We have thus no record of the Prophet except through Muslim sources, no description of his life written either from a contemporary or an unbiased standpoint. We have, it is true, the Koran, which offers us a unique insight into the Prophet's mind, because there is no doubt that its contents are genuine ; speeches, homilies and sermons actually delivered by him. But on the other hand the Koran itself was not put together until after the Prophet's death, and almost certainly does not represent, in its present haphazard form, quite what he would have wished to have handed down to future generations as the sum of his revealed teaching. The Book itself admits that Muhammad could forget the commands of the Deity, as revealed to him by the angel Gabriel¹ ; we may confidently assume that actual revelations were also at times forgotten by the little body of early disciples. In addition, the compilers of the Koran included a mass of trivial matter, of purely contemporary interest, which we must assume that the Prophet himself, had he put the book together, would have suppressed. The truth seems to be that the Koran played a very small part in the scheme of things while its creator was actually on earth ; it was only after that mighty voice was stilled for ever that there was a rush on the part of the disciples to collect such evidence of his word as could be found to be genuine beyond dispute, which was reverently but illogically put together in the form which has puzzled commentators ever since.

Muhammad was born in or about the year 570 of our era, but his life has no political importance until the commencement of his ministry some forty years later. Of his early struggles towards self-fulfilment, of his gradual and

¹ The Koran, lxxxvii, 7.

painful realization of the task awaiting him, we need say no more than to point out that the starting-point of his activities was the conviction which came in the course of time to gain a complete hold over his inner nature, that the idolatry, the infanticide, the saint and fetish worship which he saw around him in Mecca, were fundamentally wrong. He felt a call, gradually increasing in power, to preach the one true God, and the necessity for an ordered, moral life based on the wishes and revealed precepts of that God. Undoubtedly he was influenced in the early days by the various Jewish and Christian ideas, the speculations of the *Hanifs*, which were floating rather hazily in the air around him. He saw himself as the latest prophet of the historic Semitic line, come as "a plain warner" to his people, a legitimate successor to Moses, Jesus and all the ancient teachers who had come to preach the same lesson, but in vain. So at first he made no effort to inaugurate a wide propaganda, but, true to the Arab idea of the home as the centre of life, began to teach and to gain converts in his own family circle ; his wife Khadijah, his young cousin and later son-in-law Ali, an old friend named Abu Bakr, and so on. His first pronouncements, afterwards the earliest chapters of the Koran, are simple but majestic treatises on the power, the commands and especially the essential unity of God :

Say, He, God, is One ;
 God the All-Provider ;
 He begets not, neither is He begotten ;
 And none is like unto Him.¹

With the progress of the mission a simple ceremonial grew up. Emphasis was laid on the traditional duties of prayer, fasting and the carrying-out of certain ritual duties taken over from the prevailing religions. The *kiblah*, or point to which prayer ought to be directed, was laid down as Jerusalem (a proof that Muhammad regarded himself as in the succession of Jewish prophets) ; but Mecca was not entirely forgotten, for it was to be considered as especially meritorious to obtain a position for prayer so that one faced with the Ka'aba and Jerusalem in one straight line.

Although the growth of the *Juma'a*, or Congregation,

¹ The Koran : cxii.

was at first slow, the news of the Prophet's activities was bound to leak out in a society so small and confined as that of Mecca. The mission met first with incredulity, then with derision, and finally with active hostility. Many vested interests were bound up with the old beliefs, and the leading Kuraishis were not unnaturally suspicious of anything which might injure the religious prestige which the neighbourhood enjoyed, and upon which many of their incomes directly depended. And as Muhammad began to widen his appeal, a breach with his fellow citizens became inevitable. The Kuraish did not dare to lay hands on his person, because of his social position and the certainty of blood revenge, which, under Arab custom, would be compulsory upon his relations; but they were able to make the lives of his humbler followers so unpleasant that the Prophet was compelled to arrange a temporary home for them in the territory of the Christian King of Abyssinia. The failure of a Meccan delegation to the King, sent with the object of persuading him to hand over the exiles, drove the Kuraish to such bitter activity that Muhammad's composure broke down for once under the strain, and he publicly acknowledged the special position of certain of the more popular Meccan goddesses, under the designation of "daughters of God." For a while it seemed as if mutual agreement might be possible; but at the last moment Muhammad's conscience spoke clearly, and he withdrew the revelation, as a prompting of Satan. The enraged Meccans now redoubled their efforts, and for a time the whole Hashimite family seems to have been put under a kind of social ban, though exactly what form this took, and how it ended, is not known. Private grief, too, bore heavily on the Prophet at this juncture, owing to the sudden death of his wife and first disciple, Khadijah, to be followed soon after by that of Abu Talib, the father of Ali, a faithful uncle who, though not himself a believer, had throughout backed Muhammad with the prestige of his own considerable position. These private losses were counterbalanced to some extent by new conversions, and especially by the accession of Omar (afterwards the second Caliph), a man of little social position, but of great ability and tremendous determination. It is perhaps noteworthy

that after his conversion the movements of the *Juma'a* become more open ; occasionally the faithful are even to be seen at prayer in the open streets. But Muhammad had now begun to take full measure of the difficulties in front of him, and, despairing of further progress in Mecca itself, had commenced to look round for more promising fields of action. Overtures to Taif, the adjacent hill town and summer station of Mecca, proved fruitless ; the local tribe, the Thakif, would have none of him. But a chance meeting in one of the pilgrimage months, when all the world came to Mecca, was to bring him the opportunity he sought.

Some distance to the north of Mecca lay the town of Yathrib, athwart the caravan route to Syria and the West. More of a collection of fortified villages than a single town, it lived chiefly on agriculture and its famous fruit gardens. It was inhabited partly by Jews, whose numbers and importance had, however, been lately on the decline, and partly by the Azd sub-tribes of Aws and Khazraj, whose perpetual quarrels seriously jeopardized the prosperity of the district. The Khazraj were smarting under a recent defeat inflicted upon them by the Aws and the Jews in collaboration, when certain influential members of the tribe visiting Mecca came in touch with Muhammad. The general Jewish cultural influence of Yathrib, with its strong monotheistic ideas, no doubt predisposed them to the Prophet's teaching ; and they were also impressed by his personal sagacity. Negotiations led to a secret meeting outside Mecca between Muhammad (attended by his uncle Abbas) and the Khazraj representatives, who finally made the Prophet a definite offer of a home for himself and his following among themselves. The offer was accepted, and Muhammad, after sending forward the disciples, eventually left Mecca himself in secret, accompanied only by Abu Bakr. Ali was left behind to clear up the affairs of the party, and then he, too, left Mecca, apparently without molestation on the part of the Kuraish.

This move, usually known as the *Hijrah* ("Flight" or "Emigration") proved to be the turning-point both in Muhammad's personal career and in the fortunes of his race. Now destiny was to lead him from comparative failure to

overwhelming success, from obscurity to world fame ; and where the star of the Prophet led, the Arabs followed. He had long sought an opportunity to bring his religious theories to the acid test of experience ; now he was to have it. He had always preached the kingdom of God on earth ; now he had to attempt to set it up. But success brings its own penalties, in religion as in other activities. And it is undeniable that Muhammad's success as a political organizer places him at a disadvantage as compared with other great religious teachers who were not so tried. To become the founder of a State as well as the inspired prophet of a religion is to venture on a compromise between rôles which are widely different and perhaps antagonistic. But it is difficult to see, placed in the position that he now found himself, what else Muhammad could have done. A born statesman sees a task in front of him, a piece of constructive work urgently needing to be done, and history shows us that he cannot always afford to be as chary of ways and means as a private individual. That the compromise attempted by the Prophet was, on its moral side, not wholly successful, is perhaps what might have been expected ; that it had to be made at all is a point of great historical importance, because that same compromise still distinguishes, and still disturbs, the religion of Islam to-day.

By persuading the rival clans of Aws and Khazraj to co-operate in the common interest of a new faith under the designation of *Ansar* or "Helpers" (as distinguished from the *Muhajirin* or "Emigrants," the faithful few who had accompanied the Prophet on the *hijrah* from Mecca), Muhammad was able to bring peace to harassed Yathrib, soon to be re-named *Medinat an-Nebi*, the "City of the Prophet," or, for short, Medina. But the position of the Emigrants was none too secure, in spite of the efforts made by their leader to induce each family of the *Ansar* to adopt a member of the *Muhajirin*, and the Prophet was forced to adopt a raiding campaign against passing Meccan caravans in order to provide for his followers. This policy brought the Meccans into the field in full force, but at the battle of Badr they were defeated, and the prestige of Muhammad was placed so high by this success that subsequent reverses

scarcely affected it. The Kuraish possessed strong tribal allies in the country round Medina, the Asad, the Fazara (a branch of the Ghatafan) and the Judham, whom they encouraged to a sort of guerilla warfare against Medina ; Muhammad on his side found a valuable ally in the Khuza'a, who had never forgiven the Kuraish for having ousted them from their once supreme position in Mecca. In Medina itself, his most stubborn enemies proved to be the Jews, who refused point-blank to recognise his mission ; but as usual they proved incapable of supporting their hostility by force. Nevertheless their attitude had a profound effect on Muhammad, and led to drastic modifications of the new faith, away from its broad historic Semitic foundation, and in the direction of local Arab nationalism. Jerusalem was deposed from its position as the *kiblah* or prayer-point of the Faithful and Mecca established in its place. A new sabbath was ordained to distinguish the Muslim finally and definitely from the followers of the earlier dispensations ; the sixth day (*yom as-sadis*), or Friday was to be henceforth the *yom al-juma'a*, or day of the congregation, in allusion to the midday service which it was made incumbent upon the whole congregation to attend. These moves, while emphasizing the growing rupture with the Jews, began to have an opposite effect upon the Meccans. Tiring of the guerilla warfare which was ruining their long-distance commerce, the latter now began to relent towards their kinsman ; this man, they began to argue, if eccentric and even dangerous, is at least one of us at heart ; and he has shown talents which make his friendship more desirable than his enmity. Soon after there followed the definite expulsion of the Jews from Medina, which enabled the Prophet to secure the immediate future of his Emigrants by handing over to them the confiscated Jewish lands. Henceforth the Emigrants are economically the equals of the *Ansar*, and are able to supply the Prophet with a useful lever for the control of the latter. That his task even now was no easy one we gather from the Koran, which introduces us to a class of *Munafikin* or "Hypocrites," whose intrigues were a constant source of anxiety.¹ Nevertheless, Muhammad's

¹ The Koran : iii, 166 ; iv, 60 ; xxix, 11 ; and numerous other passages.

position was now strong enough to tempt the Meccans to come to terms. A meeting was arranged between Abu Sufyan, chief of the Ummeyad family and a bitter enemy of the new faith, and the Prophet's representative Othman, an Ummeyad who had become a Muslim, and who became later the third Caliph. A treaty followed, so favourable to the Meccans that zealous disciples of the type of Omar openly grumbled. But the Prophet had obtained one concession which his unerring political instinct told him was worth everything ; permission to enter Mecca with his followers and perform the *haj*. At the appointed time the Prophet and his followers arrived outside Mecca, and duly entered the sacred precincts. The Arab, as Muhammad well knew, is an acute and intelligent observer, and is always impressed by the accomplished fact. The sight of the Muslims performing the various ceremonies in perfect order, their infectious air of well-being and contentment, made a tremendous impression on the Meccans. Even the dullest had before his eyes a living example of what the Prophet could, and had, achieved ; the more astute might guess at the uses to which such a national revolution might be put. Henceforth Mecca was at heart the Prophet's ; but he was careful to take it only on his own terms. Mecca must accept unconditional surrender ; there must be no truck with idol-worship, infanticide, and other old and evil customs ; the orders of the Messenger of God must not be questioned. On the main points of faith, Muhammad was immovable ; but he was ready to compromise, as always, on inessentials. He did not look too deeply into a profession of faith, trusting to time to do its part ; the Meccans must surrender the idols, but they might keep the Ka'aba and the Black Stone. These concessions were shrewd strokes of policy, and revealed Muhammad as a master of the human heart. The Black Stone did no harm to the majesty of the One God, and the acknowledgment of the Ka'aba as the outward and visible centre of the faith, the recognition of the *haj* or pilgrimage as a permanent religious duty, gave the new body cohesion and harmony, a harmony, moreover, peculiarly acceptable to Arab national pride. At one stroke Muhammad abolished paganism, and con-

verted the most popular pagan institutions to his own use. The claim of Mecca to be spiritually the "navel of the earth" was allowed, and the *kiblah* of prayer directed for all time to the Sacred Cube.

But though the Prophet was now the master of both the leading cities, he had still to reckon with the tribes outside. An uprising of the Hawazin, headed by his old enemies the Thakif, resulted in a pitched battle which was only slightly favourable to the Muslims. The town of Taif still refused to surrender; but the Prophet's spiritual prestige unexpectedly accomplished what the strength of his arms had failed to win. The Hawazin sent in envoys asking to become Muslims, and the Thakif followed. For the time being Muhammad had nothing to worry him but administrative details, such as the final regulation of the pilgrim ceremonies, which now included a ban on any but Muslims. At the *haj* of the year 632 he himself led the pilgrims and delivered the address from the mount of Arafat. It was to be his last great public appearance. In the midsummer of the same year he began to show signs of failure; and one afternoon, in the grip of a high fever, he quietly passed away, his mind a blank, his head resting on the lap of his young wife Ayesha, the daughter of Abu Bakr.

The Prophet's decision to move to Medina had brought about, as we have seen, the first *Hijrah* or Emigration of the Muslims; his death was now to be the signal for a much greater Emigration which meant farewell to Arabia for thousands of Arabs and was destined to disperse the Arab race over a vast area of the world reaching from Morocco to the Punjab. The military expeditions which brought this second migration about followed naturally on the events of the Prophet's life, and the accident of his death. Although Muhammad had been supremely successful in his own sphere, that sphere was still at his death a limited one. The Hijaz and parts of the Yemen and western Najd acknowledged his sway; but the great tribes of central Arabia were only bound to him by the loosest of ties, and he had made almost no impression at all on the people of the extreme south and east, the Hadramawt, Bahrein and so on, or on those of the extreme north, the bedouins of the Syrian

desert and the tribes, principally Christian, who had been already settled for some generations in Syria and Mesopotamia. Moreover, his sudden death led to an internal crisis at Medina, which was only overcome by the realisation on the part of the Muslims that their only chance lay in unity, and by the firmness and sagacity of three elderly men, all of the band of "Companions" or intimates of the Prophet; Abu Bakr, Omar and Abu Ubayda. The former, after some delay, was elected the ruler of the little commonwealth, under the title of *Khalifat ar-Rasul Allah*, "The Caliph, or Successor, of the Messenger of God." The election was not popular in all quarters; the *Ansar*, the original inhabitants of Medina, now swamped in their own town by the crowd of Emigrants, clamoured for a chief of their own; and many of the Companions favoured Ali, the son-in-law and favourite of the Prophet. The scale was turned in favour of Abu Bakr by the support of the later Meccan immigrants, who had been drawn to Medina as the capital during the last years of the Prophet's life, and of the motley crowd of neo-Muslims of no particular origin or party who had been attracted to the city by hopes of employment and adventure. But once established, Abu Bakr acted with the greatest energy and determination. A raiding expedition against the northern border tribes, organised before the Prophet's death but held up by events, was immediately dispatched, and on its successful return measures were taken against backsliders among the neighbouring bedouin. Victory in these campaigns re-established Medina as a capital of full authority, and incidentally revealed a budding military genius in one Khalid bin Walid, a headstrong, cruel and vindictive young man, but a strategist of first-class ability. It was inevitable that these successes in Arabia proper should lead to a desire for a wider field of action; the Muslim conquering and disciplinary raids—for that was all they were at the moment—grew naturally into more ambitious schemes; the radius of action led on in an ever-widening circle, largely without the deliberate design of Medina, and sometimes even without its consent.

A branch of the Bakr tribe named the Shaiban were at

that time domiciled in Persian territory in lower Irak. Their prestige was high, for they had already once inflicted a serious defeat on the Imperial forces, and they were well aware of the present weakness of the Empire. Their shaikh, Muthanna, sent a message across the border to Khalid suggesting a joint raiding expedition in Persian territory. How little of an "invasion" was contemplated may be gauged from the fact that Khalid had only five hundred men with him ; yet this raid was the parent of the great Islamic empires which more than once threatened Europe, and came within measurable distance of conquering the world.

The expedition was highly successful ; Hira, then an important city, was laid under tribute, all central Irak pillaged, and Persian territory penetrated as far as Palmyra, where Khalid and his little band once more touched the desert and escaped. In the meanwhile an envoy from the Christian Arab tribes of the Syrian border had reached Medina, to suggest joint action against the Romans. These tribes had followed the events of recent years in the motherland with keen interest ; and the cancellation of their usual subsidy by Heraclius, the reigning Roman emperor at Constantinople, was quite enough to make them contemplate trouble, could they be sure of adequate support from the rear. The exact course of the subsequent negotiations is not known, but we find the Caliph in the spring of 634 sanctioning the despatch of four small independent raiding forces, one of which was commanded by Yazid, the son of Abu Sufyan the Ummeyyad chief, and another by Amr bin al-As (afterwards famous as the conqueror of Egypt). By the victory of Yazid over Sergius, the *patricius* or governor of Cæsarea, Jerusalem was cut off from the sea and the whole of southern Syria thrown into turmoil. The Emperor, who was at the time in north Syria, at once dispatched a large expedition under the command of his own brother, Theodorus, and the Roman army, moving slowly down country, soon placed the little Arab forces in extreme danger. But Khalid, who had received word from the Caliph near Palmyra, now suddenly appeared in the rear of the Romans, at the very gates of

Damascus. At the subsequent battle of Adnadain (between Jerusalem and Gaza), the Arabs were completely victorious ; the Roman forces were put to flight, and the invaders left free to raid the country as far north as Homs.

This victory was followed almost immediately by the death of Abu Bakr, and with the reign of the new Caliph, Omar, we enter upon a new phase of Arab military expansion. The extraordinary success of the raiding expeditions was creating a new situation in Arabia itself. Medina was besieged by volunteers who were coming forward not only in ones and twos but in whole tribes, clamouring to be allowed to go to the wars ; especially men from the south, where economic conditions were growing steadily worse. The military leaders, too, were beginning to see further possibilities than mere occasional raids, with nothing but loot as a reward ; they began to dream of new lands flowing with milk and honey, of a permanent occupation which should ensure competence and a career for every Arab, wealth, power, and fame for themselves. From this time onwards the campaigns begin to assume a much more serious form. The forces are more carefully organised ; the plans of campaign more deliberately designed. The border raiders, despised for generations by both Persians and Romans, are developing into serious invaders.

Although Syria still held the main attraction for Medina, Omar's first actual campaign was directed against Irak. The Persian authorities had recovered from the surprise of Khalid's previous raid, and were preparing to descend upon Muthanna and his Beni Shaiban with overwhelming forces, and, in response to an appeal from the latter, the Caliph sent a body of men to their aid. At the Battle of the Bridge, towards the end of 654, Muthanna was, however, decisively defeated. In the meanwhile the attention of Medina had been diverted to Syria, where, early in 635, Khalid scored two more striking successes over the Roman forces, and soon afterwards occupied Damascus. These reverses spurred the Romans to another desperate effort. A new army was marshalled under the command of a leading general of the day, Theodorus Trithurius, probably of at least 50,000 men, or double the strength of the Arabs.

Khalid at once relinquished Damascus and retreated to the Yarmuk valley, where he selected his own position for the inevitable battle with great care and skill. For some weeks the two armies stood facing each other ; then desultory fighting was started by the sudden desertion of the Christian Arabs from the Roman ranks. The Roman higher command was beset with jealousy and intrigue and proved no match for Khalid, who, in one final day of fighting, practically annihilated the whole force. Damascus was promptly re-occupied, and the whole of Syria lay at the mercy of the Arabs. Abu Ubayda had, in the meanwhile, arrived at the front, to take over the conquered province in the name of Islam—proof positive that the Caliph this time intended permanent conquest. The Roman outposts were driven to the Amanus, and two cities only held out for some time longer : Cæsarea and Jerusalem.

Muthanna in Irak had been sorely harassed by the Persians, but had nevertheless succeeded in inflicting a defeat upon them at the Battle of Buweib (October, 635). Omar now dispatched Sa'd bin Abi Wakkas, another of the Companions, as his plenipotentiary, and arranged to give him adequate military support. The Persians, who had watched the collapse of the Roman power in Syria at first with amazement and latterly with alarm, organised a new army under the leadership of Rustam, the chief minister of the kingdom and (since the King was a nonentity), the real ruler. But at Kadisiyah, on the edge of the desert, Rustam's forces met with complete disaster, and he himself was killed. Here again, a big part in the decision was played by the resident Christian Arabs and by the passive sympathy of the Aramæan natives, who hated the Persian overlords, and saluted the newcomers as brother Semites speaking a tongue akin to their own. Without further opposition the Arabs marched across the *Sawad*—the famous "Black Lands" of Babylonia—to Ctesiphon, the Imperial capital. Surprisingly little further resistance was offered by the Persians ; at the comparatively small battle of Jalulah the Arabs were again victorious, and this time their conquest of the country was complete. It only needed Khalid's intervention in the north across the Syrian desert to round

off the victory by driving the Arab boundary to the base of the Anatolian and Kurdish mountains.

The success of the Arab arms had led to some division of opinion as to future policy in the inner circles at Medina. A strong colonising party had now sprung into being among the younger generation, which urged that the victories should be exploited to their utmost ; the Caliph, however, and a number of the older Companions in whose minds the religious issue was still upmost, were suspicious of this rapid success, and fearful that it would corrupt the morals of the Faithful and lead them to concentrate their attention on the things of this world instead of the next. The support of the colonising party by the military leaders on the spot forced the Caliph to yield ground ; and a compromise was agreed upon, under which the establishment of permanent Arab camp-cities was sanctioned at Kufa and Basrah in Irak, and in the vicinity of some of the big cities in Syria. But the Caliph still fought successfully against the idea of the Arabs taking over and colonising land in the new countries. They were to be a class of warrior-administrators, living by and to themselves in their own " stations," rather on the lines of the British system in India. Meanwhile, the last two walled cities of Syria, Cæsarea and Jerusalem, finally capitulated, and the Arab dominion was complete, less than eighteen years after the first Migration, from Aden to the Taurus mountains, and from Basrah to the Mediterranean.

Such an extraordinary military achievement, though destined to be overshadowed by later events, must cause surprise, particularly when it is remembered that the Arabs of that day were little more than unlettered barbarians,¹ and their enemies the two greatest Imperial powers of the age. But the Arabs possessed certain moral advantages which their adversaries lacked and in addition fortune greatly favoured them by granting them an extremely favourable time for their attacks. The two Empires had just been engaged in long and mutually destructive wars, which had

¹ A Thakifite boy of 14 named Ziyad (afterwards the celebrated governor of Basrah), was made accountant to one of the main armies, because he was the only person available who was able to write !

drained them of men and treasure, and left them exhausted, dispirited and burdened with taxation. Their rule bore hardly on many of their subjects, particularly in the Roman Empire, where a State Church was perpetually engaged in trying to force the dissenting Christian Syrians into orthodoxy. In both Syria and Irak the governments were alien to the great bulk of the inhabitants. Thus the Arabs were able to depend upon a vast mass of inert public opinion which was imbued with strong, though usually passive, dislike of its present masters, and in active sympathy with political change. The Aramæan peasants of Irak had every reason to detest their cruel and oppressive Persian landlords, and the Syrians resented both the orthodox church policy of the Romans and their attempts to introduce a Hellenising and Westernising culture which was alien to the country. Internal taxation, which had reached alarming proportions in both empires, fell disproportionately on the colonial peasants. There was thus every reason to welcome, on economic as on racial and religious grounds, an intruder who would promise light taxation and the minimum of interference in private and religious life. It is significant in this connection to note that the only two places in Syria to offer a real resistance were Cæsarea and Jerusalem, in both of which cities the orthodox, official and non-native element was predominant. The Arab advance, in fact, would almost certainly have been impossible but for the support, active or passive, of the natives. The traditional idea of the Arabs advancing as religious fanatics, the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, is misleading. Not only were the invaders not active proselytisers, but they were in many cases themselves very indifferent Muslims. They advanced as a nation, not as a church ; but, owing to the fact that the machinery of their Church and State was one, their wars automatically took on a pseudo-religious tinge. They were, however, very far from being filled with the pious desire to convert all the world to Islam. On the contrary, the conversion of foreigners was deliberately discouraged, for the very good reason that, owing to the fact that the bulk of taxation was paid by non-Muslims while Muslims actually drew a pension from the State,

every conversion meant a double loss to the Exchequer. Furthermore, the Arabs, though in theory required to look upon any convert to Islam as a brother, were far too exclusive by nature to accept such a command seriously in practice. Consequently, we find not only the "people of a book"—that is to say, Christians, Jews and Sabians entitled to the protection of the Muslims by virtue of having themselves a written revelation from God—left unmolested, but even the Zoroastrians, who were technically heathen and therefore fit only for destruction. One exception, however, was made ; the Caliph Omar laid it down that Arabia itself, as the birth-place of the new faith, must be inhabited by none but Muslims, and Christians and Jews still resident there were deported by his orders and given lands elsewhere. Religious intolerance, so often thrown in the face of the Arab invaders, was in fact a plant of later growth, needing the theories of the schoolmen and the background of a settled civilisation to bring it to fruition. For the present, the Arabs were well content to let the various religious sects of Irak and Syria alone so long as they paid their taxes and gave no trouble ; and we can hardly be surprised that the Jews and Christians, accustomed to the harsh rule of the Orthodox church or the vagaries of the Zoroastrian priesthood, viewed the change with indifference, and even with active delight.

CHAPTER III

MASTERS OF THE WORLD

JUST as the Prophet, the founder of the Arab Empire, combined in his own person the dual functions of spiritual adviser and temporal ruler of his people, so the Arab dominion had from the first a dual character. The Arab advance created two separate political organisations : firstly, a purely Arab empire, created and ruled by Arabs largely for the benefit of Arabs, and organised and administered on purely Arab national lines ; this lasted, roughly, a century, and came to an end with the fall of the Ummeyyad dynasty of Caliphs ; and secondly, an international Islamic empire, in which the Arabs formed only one of a great multitude of races of Believers, one after another of which carried on the traditions, the culture and the standard of Islam after the Arabs themselves had lost their first vigour. This second, theocratic empire lasted some twelve hundred years, that is, into modern times, being only terminated by the total collapse of Islamic civilisation before the pressure of modern Western Europe. Though this Islamic empire was by no means Arab—the non-Arab races contributed far more to its culture and influence than did the Arabs themselves—it took its legislative and judicial system and much of its social tone from its original Arab model ; for since Islam is, as a religious social institution, essentially an Arab idea, any good Muslim must, to some extent, either consciously or unconsciously model himself on Arab behaviour, just as he adopts Arab personal names and the Arabic language for his religious and cultural medium. Hence there is a sense in which Arab dominion ends only finally with the collapse of Islam in modern times, and for

this reason it is convenient to take the end of the eighteenth century of our era, which is the time when the Islamic countries began finally to lose their independence as a rough dividing line in the history of the Arabs, between ancient and modern times. Ancient times can be taken to cover the period of the early Arab conquests, the supremacy, decline and fall of the purely Arab empire of the Ummeyyads ; followed by the rise of the second, pseudo-Arab, Islamic imperial system which was maintained by Arab, Persian and Turk in turn until its gradual collapse from the seventeenth century onwards. The modern period is that of European control, exercised at first indirectly but latterly directly, and characterised by a revival of purely Arab, as distinct from Islamic or Saracenic, activity. In it Arab political aims and hopes, as such, become hopelessly entangled with the world-wide ambitions of European powers, and the Arabs—and, in fact, all Islam—become merely pawns in the game of Western Imperial rivalry.

The period of the first, true Arab, empire is also conveniently divisible under two heads ; the period of growth and prosperity from the Caliph Omar to the assassination of the Caliph Walid II (744 A.D.) ; and that of rapid decline to the civil war which terminated in the fall of the Ummeyyad house and the rise of the Abbassids of Baghdad (749). From the first *hijrah* of the Prophet (taken by the Caliph Omar, on Ali's suggestion, as the starting point of the new Muslim era)¹ to the death of Walid is 127 years, which space of time marked the rise and midday bloom of the empire. Its growth, however, did not take a wholly placid or prosperous course even in the days of its prime. It is characteristic of the Arabs that power and prosperity, responsibility and fame left them temperamentally very little different from the bickering, ingenuous, childish people of the Arabian steppes. They were as much swayed by personality ; as ready victims to tribal laws and customs ; as restless and as lusty sons of nature ; as energetic, as narrow-minded, as licentious and as vindictive as before. They

¹ The word "Hijrah" (often anglicised as "Hegira") is the noun of the verb "hajara,"—"to emigrate"; it is thus more accurately rendered by "Migration" rather than the usual "Flight."

seemed as unconscious of the vast responsibility to which destiny had called them, as they were unstirred by the worldly opportunities which it offered them ; empire, in fact, except when it brought them in immediate, temporary luxuries, money, personal distinction or passing pleasure, merely bored them, and they remained as insensible to the advantages of civilisation as the famous poet-princess of the Kalb who, amid all the comforts of the Damascus court, spent her time bemoaning, in exquisite verse, the loss of the black tents and wide spaces of the desert. To this lack of sensibility to the attractions of a well-organised and refined existence the Arabs probably owe, in part at any rate, their long and continuous history, for it has made them peculiarly indifferent to " the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and therefore very difficult to exterminate ; but it is an outlook with serious disadvantages, particularly for an imperial race. Against it must be debited the frequent lack of political judgment, the failure to make use of responsibility for any constructive end, the bland and almost childish refusal to learn the lessons of power, or to impose upon the conquered peoples an Imperial design which might remain in history as a credit to its creators even after their departure. There is a curious haphazard appearance about Arab history, which tends to make it, full as it is of great personalities and enlivening incidents, dull and monotonous in general tone. Rarely is the scene lifted by the mighty sweep of great ambition, by the grandeur of human talent working on a vast stage ; one misses the dreams of Alexander, the roads and laws of Rome, the continual political experimentation which makes the British Empire so fascinating a study. The Arabs gave much to civilisation ; a new and fine religious conception ; a then quite novel idea of the importance of individual behaviour, of personal cleanliness, of good manners and an idealistic treatment of women, which achieved its finest fruits in the chivalry of later ages ; and an art convention which, working within the restrictions imposed by religious propriety, produced forms in the realm of decorative work which are acknowledged to be unique. Many of the best ideas of the Arabs—of the unity of God ; the propriety and necessity of self-

indulgence within certain clearly-defined limits (as opposed to the ascetic ideal of orthodox Christianity) ; the essential brotherhood of man, not necessarily conflicting, except in the minds of pedants, with the needed regulation of the everyday world in ranks and classes—came like a breath of fresh desert air upon the pompous, morbid and degraded Christianity of the early middle ages. Much of the sanity, balance and clear thought which reached the northern European nations with the Reformation owes its origin to the teaching which Luther and other Protestant leaders derived from Arab Spain. It cannot, therefore, be said with truth that the Arab Empire gave nothing to the world, for its gifts of mind were genuine and lasting¹ ; but it did singularly fail to create a permanent organisation in any way comparable, say, to the Roman Empire, or the empires of modern Europe. It resembled rather the imperial system of the ancient Athenians, strong and vigorous in its prime, but resting on little foundation, and liable at any moment to internal rupture and division ; with an insistence too on the value of the individual rather than the State, which, in fact, brings the Arabs into very close intellectual alliance with the Hellenes.

While the Caliph Omar lived, however, the newly-founded State continued to enjoy the same success and prosperity that had marked the first onrush into Irak and Syria. The boundaries on the east were not, for the moment, extended owing to the peremptory orders of the Caliph, who feared that an invasion of Persia proper might lead to a dangerous diffusion of national energy. He did not prevent, however, the annexation of parts of Cilicia, nor, what was to prove of much greater moment, the invasion of Egypt. Once the original policy of petty raids had been exchanged for that of permanent occupation, measures against Egypt were, indeed, inevitable ; for the Egyptian coast (then in Roman hands) menaced the whole of Palestine and Syria, and the Red Sea port of Kulsum (Suez), then an important naval base, threatened the Hijaz and the capital,

¹ For a comprehensive account of the Arab influence on civilization, see De Lacy O'Leary : " Arabic Thought and Its Place in History " ; London. 1922.

Medina, itself. The latter had already grown beyond the resources and ability of local agriculture to support it ; and both Medina and Mecca were large purchasers of Egyptian cereals, a fact which made the Arabs peculiarly susceptible to Roman pressure exercised through Egypt. Ships from Alexandria, too, had actually taken active part against the Arabs during the Syrian campaigns. The first attempt against the country was made at the end of 639 by Amr bin al-As, who was shortly afterwards reinforced from Medina by Zubair (one of the best known of the Companions) with a new army. Almost the same thing happened as in Irak and Syria. The attempts to force the orthodox creed on the country, coupled with heavy taxation, had alienated the bulk of the people, and no effort was made except by the Roman garrisons to stop the progress of the Arabs. By 642 the whole country, including the strong fortresses of Babylon (near which the Arabs founded their new capital of Fustat, the mother of the modern Cairo), and Alexandria, was in Arab hands. This conquest, of great importance in itself—for it laid the foundations of that Arab Egypt which has had a continuous history to the present day—was also notable for the field it opened up in northern Africa. Before a very few years had passed, the Arabs had begun to penetrate along the coast to Barbary, from where their conquests were eventually rounded off by the occupation of Morocco and Spain.

The internal discord which was to be such a distinguishing feature of the Muslim empire first showed itself seriously at the death of Omar (644), who, like the Prophet himself, left no heir. There had, no doubt, been differences of opinion before this, but they had rarely been serious enough to be dangerous. Both Abu Bakr and Omar had been men of unflinching resolution and stern sense of duty, and under their just but heavy hands disloyalty had no chance to raise its head. But their successor, Othman, elected largely owing to the mutual jealousies of others of the Companions, possessed, with the exception of a genuine and passionate loyalty to the cause of the commonwealth, but few qualities to bring to the now heavy responsibilities of the Caliphal office. The fact, too, that he was an Ummeyad, combined

with the noticeable tendency on the part of Omar to appoint members of that family to responsible positions in the young State, was enough in itself to alarm other clans of the Kuraish—particularly the Hashimites—who began to fear that the pre-eminence of the Ummeyyad and Makhsum families in the commercial counsels of pre-islamic Mecca was now to be repeated on the wider stage of world empire. That the Ummeyyads had earned their new positions by their own personal qualities, there can be little doubt. Even the Prophet himself, his quarrel with the family once ended, had appointed leading members of it, including Yazid and Muawiyah, the sons of the arch-enemy Abu Sufiyan himself, to places of trust, and Omar (and after him Othman) were in reality only carrying on this, probably quite necessary, policy. But the situation could hardly have commended itself in this unprejudiced and detached way to the sons of old loyal followers who had borne the burden and heat of the first days. Steeped in pious memories, which brought back Muhammad to them rather as the Prophet of God than as a State-builder, they were naturally scandalised that when Fate (or, as they would naturally regard it, the Almighty) had turned the scales in their favour, the plums of high office should fall to just those persons who had been the most active original enemies. The murmurs of discontent, restrained by the imperious personality of Omar, soon began to grow loud under Othman, a weak and kindly old man, who, unlike his predecessor, was also himself of the hated family. The agitation was increased by the almost endemic discontent of the *Ansar* or original "Helpers" of Medina, the old natives of the city before the Prophet's arrival; who considered, not without some cause, that they had been somewhat indifferently treated by everybody, not excepting Muhammad himself. Soon even some of the Companions, men like Zubair, Talha and Ali who had for so long stood so close to the throne and never had the chance to occupy it, were implicated in disloyal activities. The political intrigues of the capital began to be repeated in the newly-conquered provinces, specially Irak and Egypt; Syria, however, wisely and humanely governed by Muawiyah, remained quiet and untroubled.

Oddly enough, the military prowess of the realm was completely unaffected by the disaffection at home, and constant victories and ever-widening boundaries testified to the world of the might of a Caliph, who was in fact unable to defend himself in his own house from the attack of a few roughs. One night was selected to bring matters to a head, and the unfortunate Othman, then over eighty, was assassinated in cold blood.

But Othman was greater in his death than in his life. To the end he steadfastly disputed the right of the rebels to question his authority, and his family were now to reap the rewards of his obstinate courage. Ali, by permitting himself to be acclaimed Caliph by the rebels, automatically gave an excellent pretext to the Ummeyyads of Syria to take the field against him ; for although the Prophet had done his best to break down the barbarous old Arab custom of blood-revenge, the sentiment of natural family ties still remained. The Syrians, also, had been too short a time under Muslim dominion to care very much about the political theories of Islam, or the rights of one party or another ; all they asked for was good government, and this Muawiyah had given them. Accordingly, when he asked their allegiance in the great mosque at Damascus in the fight against the usurper of his murdered kinsman's rights, they stood by him to a man. Ali, meanwhile, had to contend with the rivalry of Zubair and Talha and the hostility of Ayesha, the widow of the Prophet ; the combination of enemies was too much for him, and even at the time of his death (661), also at the hands of an assassin, he had failed to assert his authority over the whole Empire. The weakness of his son Hassan gave Muawiyah his chance ; having had himself proclaimed Caliph at Jerusalem—like Mecca and Medina a holy city, and one well within his sphere of influence—he came to terms with Hassan and secured his retirement from the scene. Except for the abortive rebellion under his successor of the second son of Ali, Hosein—a rebellion which, owing to its pathetic end, was to gain Hosein immortal fame among the saints and heroes of Islam—there was little more trouble politically to be feared from the Alid house. Unity had been restored to the State by the centralising of

the Caliphal power in the hands of the Ummeyyad house.

But a cleavage had in fact been driven into the body of the Faithful which was destined to remain unhealed even after thirteen centuries.¹ No Muslim could fail to remember that Ali, however chequered and unsatisfactory his political career might have been, was still the Prophet's son-in-law and one of his earliest disciples ; none but could help some remorse for the fate of Hosein, the Prophet's last surviving grandson. Memories of the early days of the faith now rapidly receding, memories which would be treasured by the Faithful all down the centuries to come, clustered round these names. Moreover Ali, clumsy diplomat perhaps, was yet a man of wide culture, a true and loyal Muslim and in many ways a lovable character ; and if his son Hassan had proved himself to be little else but a selfish time-server, the family honour had been amply redeemed by Hosein "the martyr." Irak, faithless in life to both Ali and Hosein, began after their death to weave stories round their name, to console herself for her loss of political power by placing her heroes on spiritual pedestals. And as the boundaries of the Empire spread eastward, embracing first Persia, then Khorassan, then Khiva, Trans-Oxiana and the northern borderland of India, more and more foreign, oriental influences began to circulate in the rapidly growing cities of Basrah and Kufa from which the various eastern campaigns were directed. Heresies of all kinds, political or religious, began to breed rapidly in this favourable atmosphere, and age-old Persian speculations began to re-appear in an Islamic dress, in a way which, could they have detected them, would have alarmed the orthodox at Medina and profoundly shocked the Prophet. A theory, possibly founded on Jewish messianic conceptions and conceived by a Jewish convert to Islam, began to be circulated of the *wilayah* of Ali, and his direct descendants—that is, of their special spiritual quality of "companionship" with God, which made them peculiarly qualified to act as the Imam or

¹ Serious trouble was caused in Baghdad in the winter of 1927 between the Ministry of Education and the pupils of a Government school, by a teacher who had published a book "slighting" Ali, by referring to Muawiyah as the better man.

spiritual leader of the Faithful.¹ Hence arose the *Shiah* or Party of Ali, who claimed that, since the Caliphs of Damascus had stolen that which was not rightly theirs (since under this theory only descendants of Ali possessed the special power of communion with God, and therefore only they were fit to rule the community), they owed allegiance only to the Alid Imam. Such views, naturally, had to be kept under cover, but the Imperial Government was never able to stamp them out, and in the end it was the Shiah influence which was chiefly responsible for bringing about the downfall of the Ummeyyad house. The importance of the Shiah movement has been maintained to modern times ; not only is it, in one of its forms, the national religion of Persia, but it has always had, and still retains to-day, a numerous and powerful Arab following, centring upon the two Irak cities of Kerbela (where Hosein and his half-brother Abbas fell in battle against the Caliphal forces) and Najaf, the reputed burial place of Ali. About half of the Arabs of Irak are Shiahs, and there are also bodies of Arab Shiahs in Syria, Egypt, the Yemen and other parts of Arabia.

The internal dissensions of the Empire, however, were destined to bear fruit rather in the future than at the time of their birth. The military progress of the Arabs seemed, indeed, but slightly if at all affected by them. Once freed of Ali, Muawiyah devoted all his great ability to external conquest. The Byzantine (Roman) dominions were overrun, and twice Arab troops reached the gates of Constantinople itself. Every year witnessed an extension of Arab power along the North African coast. An army recruited in Irak under the direction of Ziyad (now restored to favour and the governorship of Basrah) set out across the northern marches of Persia, captured Merv and Herat, crossed the Oxus, and occupied Bokhara. One result of this expedition was the arrival in Basrah of several thousand

¹ Strictly speaking, the Imam is the leader of public prayer, an office which automatically formed part of the Caliphal dignity, because leadership in prayer was, following the example of the Prophet, regarded as a sign of temporal authority. The term is always used by the Shiahs, however, in a special sense, as the title of the twelve members of the Alid family who form the Shiah apostolic line. The word is also freely used by other Muslims as a term for the head of the State ; thus Ibn Sa'ud at the present day is usually spoken of as " the Imam " by his Wahabi subjects.

Turkish prisoners—the first to enter the Muslim Empire of a race that was later to dominate it. In the east, Arab armies penetrated as far as Makran and Kandahar. This military progress went forward in the reign of Muawiyah's son and successor Yazid, who had, however, to deal with a very difficult situation on the "home front." The attempt of Hosein to gain Irak, which happened early in this reign, has already been mentioned. More serious at the time was the opposition of one of the sons of Zubair, the Companion and old rival of Ali, which won over the Hijaz and much of Arabia proper, and threatened at one time to involve Egypt and Irak. Ibn Zubair possessed, as was natural, tremendous prestige in the social world of Mecca and Medina, now, in the absence of the Imperial government, made up almost entirely of retired generals, descendants of the Companions, religious legalists, and wealthy families who had come to spend their declining years in the full odour of sanctity. The Hijaz, too, was a peculiarly difficult place to deal with from the military point of view, partly on account of its isolation, but even more because of its sentimental hold over the minds of loyal Muslims everywhere. Yazid died before the issue was decided, and so did his short-lived son and successor, Muawiyah II. And now the rebellion took on a phase which was destined to have the most serious consequences, both for the Ummeyyad house and the Empire.

The rivalry of the various great tribes, though temporarily submerged by the joint national triumphs of the conquests, began to come into the open again once the national life had settled down, and it now possessed far greater potentialities of mischief, because it had an imperial instead of a local Arabian stage to play upon. A branch of the Kuda'a called the Kalb had recently obtained great power in Syria owing to the fact that Yazid's mother had been of the tribe, and their success had aroused the hatred of the principal Modari tribe resident in Syria, the Kais Ailan. Agents of Ibn Zubair approached the latter tribe on the death of Yazid and succeeded in winning over their leading men, including the governor of Damascus. The sudden death of the younger Muawiyah left the Ummeyyad party without a natural leader, for Khalid, the other

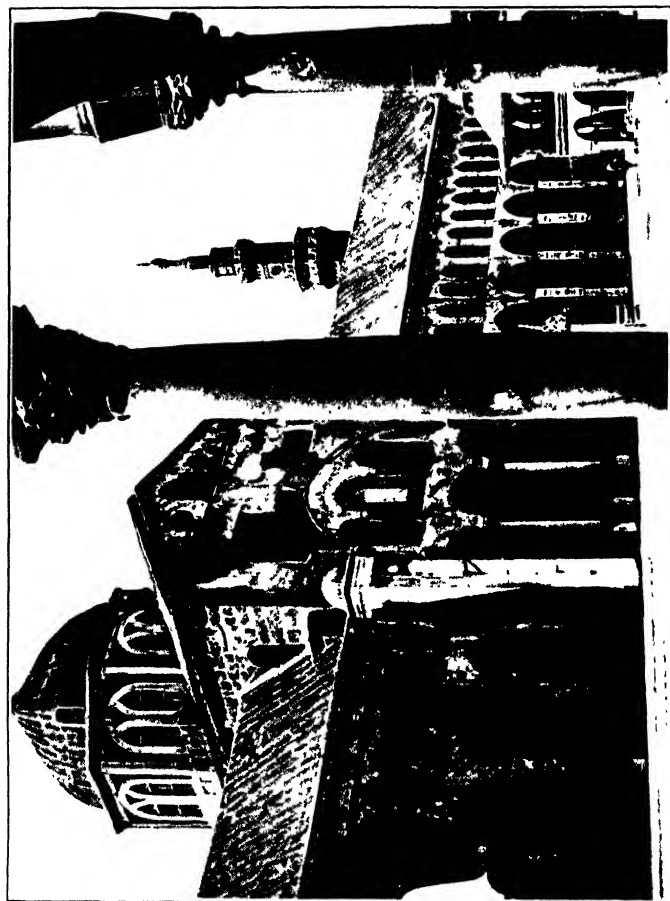
son of Yazid, was only a boy. The rebels saw their chance and took it, and for the moment it looked as if they might win the day. But the Ummeyad cause was saved by the principal shaikh of the Kalb, who rallied their supporters and finally persuaded an able member of a cadet branch of the family, named Merwan, to allow himself to be proclaimed Caliph. At the battle of Merj Rahit, near Damascus, the Kaisite supporters of Ibn Zubair were utterly defeated, and Merwan was able to enter the city, seek the hand of Yazid's widow in marriage and secure the throne. But his position was far from secure. The old opposition to the Ummeyyads as such had, in the case of Muawiyah's descendants, become softened with time, but the public was not altogether prepared to give an unhesitating allegiance to an Ummeyad usurper. Moreover the bitter fight of Merj Rahit, and the cruel way in which the victory was exploited, intensified the hatred of Kalbite and Kaisite to such a pitch as to make the feud a permanent danger to the commonwealth. So general was the chaos in public affairs during the reign of Merwan and the beginning of that of his son Abdul Malik that on the occasion of one *haj* at Mecca the standards of four Royal groups, all claiming to be the rightful Caliphs, were set up outside the holy city ; of Abdul Malik himself ; of Ibn Zubair (who had succeeded all this time in retaining hold of the Hijaz and southern Irak), of Muhammad al-Hanifiyah, the son of Ali by a slave girl, and, since the death of Hosein, the accepted leader of the Shiahs ; and the shaikh of the Kharijites, an extreme Puritan sect of early Islam who had given great trouble to Ali during his short rule in Irak. For a time, too, Abdul Malik had to face a pretender and rival in Damascus itself. But he possessed great ability and unswerving determination, and one by one he overcame all his enemies. A final victory over Ibn Zubair and his Meccan partisans secured the position of the Caliph and the unity of the Empire. But a fearful price had been paid. The constant civil war had taken its toll of lives and treasure, and had brought in its train new feuds and new bitternesses. The siege of Mecca, which formed part of the final campaign against Ibn Zubair, resulted in great distress to the inhabitants and

offered a certain moral affront to the millions of quiet, pious Muslims for whom the sanctity of the holy city was still almost an article of faith. And the passing of Ibn Zubair himself—the son of a famous Companion and of a daughter of Abu Bakr, still alive, as an old woman of nearly a hundred, at the time of the siege—seemed in a vivid way to mark the end of an epoch, the epoch of the first days of the faith, of the “Emigrants” and “Helpers,” the Companions and the first “rightly-guided” Caliphs of Medina, of the brilliant days of the early conquests, of the old purely Arabian influence, now being rapidly replaced by the cosmopolitanism of a huge imperial system. Men somehow could not help regretting, even where they recognised its inevitability, the passing of Mecca and Medina in favour of the Syrian Damascus; for Damascus, though by now thoroughly Arabicized and Muslim, had still a tradition of its own going back countless centuries before Islam. It had known Greece and Rome, the Hebrews of old, the far-off pagan Syrian kings of the Old Testament and even earlier. The other large cities of the Empire, Kufa and Basrah in Irak, Fustat in Egypt, Kairowan in *Ifrikiyah* (North Africa), were bringing the Arabs into touch with influences which, even if they were for the moment despised and trampled upon, were yet steadily working upon them, tending to de-arabize them, to soften them, to change them from proud tribesmen of the open steppes into traders, soldiers, men of the world and imperial patricians. The Islam which was now beginning to grow up was to be a vast world civilisation, built up by forces derived from many other places than Arabia. Greek art, philosophy and science; Persian and Indian mysticism; Turkish stolidness and military skill; Levantine sea-lore and Jewish financial ability were all by now at work within the great frame which had been created by the combined fighting-colonising-religious impulse of the Arabs. The general influences which were to be known to later Europe characteristically as “Saracenic”—the fruits, that is to say, of the later, fully-developed Islamic civilisation—were for the most part non-Arabian, even when clothed in Arab dress. Even so apparently a thoroughly Islamic social feature as

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the *hammam* (still called in the West the "Turkish Bath") was not in origin an Arab invention ; it reached Islam through the Persians, who had it from the ancient Romans. Thus the modern party of "fundamentalists" among the Arabs, which looks back with regret to the days of the "rightly-guided" Caliphs and regards early Islam as the only true basis for Arab national life, can point to a strong basis of historical truth in support of its contentions. It is indisputable, for instance, that the present day Mecca of the Wahabis (who are the great modern Arab fundamentalists), represents the Arab national genius much more accurately than do the hybrid, "protected," but more prosperous cities of Baghdad, Beirut or Cairo. But unfortunately in an imperial as in other careers, there is no going backwards. A nation, like a man, may advance in life if it possesses the desire and the means ; but it will have to pay the price. The true fallacy in the views of the ultra-nationalist Arab of to-day, as in those of the "Little Englander" or any other thinker whose affections are set rather upon a racial than an imperial ideal, lies in the fact, not that the views are in themselves wrong or foolish, but that they are not practical politics. The Arabs committed themselves irrevocably to an imperial career by the early conquests which formed the second "Migration" ; the eventual price they had to pay, as always, was the sacrifice of their individual nationhood to a wider and loftier political conception.

For the time being, however, the Empire was the Arabs' and during the reign of Abdul Malik and his son Walid it reached an extent and eminence which has never been surpassed by any other Islamic realm, and which indeed exceeded even the great empires of modern times with two exceptions, Great Britain and Russia. The far eastern provinces of Samarkand, Kandahar and Kabul, which had been lost in the confusion of preceding years, were recovered ; Kashgar was occupied and northern India invaded and in part subdued ; the institution of annual raids into Byzantine territory, originated by Muawiyah, was revived ; and, most important of all, the Arab position in Africa was consolidated by the final conquest of the Berbers, a more troublesome enemy even than the Byzantine Romans.



Court of the Ummeyad Mosque, Damascus.

There followed from this a further campaign along the coast, which brought the Arab arms to Morocco, and afterwards to Spain. From Gibraltar to the Indus the whole of the then known world was under the control of Damascus. Nor did administrative organisation lag behind military success. Both Abdul Malik and Walid were born sovereigns, men who felt the majesty and responsibility of the purple, and were determined to make their subjects understand what the Arab name now stood for. The makeshift systems of the previous reigns were now abolished. Greek and Persian, hitherto the official languages of the two main divisions of the Empire, were now superseded by Arabic ; the motley coinage, partly Roman, partly Persian, partly native to the various countries conquered, was now abolished in favour of new money, coined in the name of Allah and His servant, the Caliph of Islam. An elaborate system of posts connected Damascus with all the other cities, and the military leaders on the distant frontiers. The world's oldest city had now become, for a brief space, the world's capital. Great new buildings began to supersede the humbler dwellings of a less fortunate age, and the countryside of Syria was dotted with the villas and retreats of the Court and the wealthy citizens of the metropolis. The great mosque, still the principal building of the city, was laid out by Walid somewhat to the east, probably, of the old temple of the Sun, which had served in turn as a Roman pagan sanctuary, a Christian church, and the earliest mosque of the first Arab conquerors. This erection was in the full tradition of Damascus which, through all its known history, had always tended to group itself round a temple of some kind ; and the great mosque has ever since continued to be the acknowledged centre of the city's activities, as it is its chief architectural ornament. Its erection was carried out regardless of cost, skilled workmen being imported for the purposes even from as far afield as Egypt and Constantinople. Of the actual life of the city at this period, we possess, strangely enough, but few records ; but we know that its boundaries then extended over large areas of what is now market garden, and that it must have been adorned with all that the autocratic masters of a vast Empire could

give it. Unhappily, the zeal of the later Abbassid Caliphs of Baghdad to obliterate all trace of their Ummeyyad predecessors led to the destruction of practically every building in Damascus except the great mosque, and the later historians were not anxious, for obvious reasons, to pay too noticeable a regard to the Ummeyyad capital.

But Damascus was not the only city to profit by the renewed architectural activity which marked the reigns of these two Caliphs. The Prophet's mosque at Medina—so redolent of sacred memories—was beautified and enlarged, at the expense, however, of adjacent property, which included the Prophet's house ; a course which did not meet with universal approval. The so-called " Mosque of Omar " at Jerusalem was built by Abdul Malik on the reputed site of the old Temple of Solomon. Outlying cities of the Empire began to reflect the growing wealth and taste of a more settled age. Arts other than architecture had, however, less opportunity to flourish. The Empire was still in its early combative, constructive stage, Islam had yet to reach the afternoon of quiet, meditative luxury which produced the brilliant Courts of Baghdad and Cordova. Only in the holy cities of the Hijaz, strangely enough, did much intellectual activity manifest itself ; in Medina, in the schools of law which were slowly evolving out of the necessity of co-ordinating the facts, laws and customs of the early days in order to hand them down to generations which would have no direct memory of such things ; in Mecca, in the more pleasurable but less reputable cultivation of poetry and music, which were beginning to give the reputations of the singing boys and dancing girls of the holy city a diffusion as wide as the Empire itself. The Court of Damascus, naturally, attracted the flower of artistic talent, headed by the poet Akhtal, a Christian Arab who held a tremendous vogue for many years. In the same city and at the same time another Christian, John of Damascus, was by his teaching laying the foundation of a good deal of the scholastic co-ordination of later Islam.

But the crowning achievement of this brilliant period was the conquest of the greatest European country ever held by the Arabs—Spain. Almost as brilliant, though less

successful, was the gigantic attack launched against Constantinople by Walid's brother and successor, Suleiman, an attack inspired, it is said, by a sibylline prophecy to the effect that the Roman capital would fall to a caliph who bore the name of an ancient Hebrew prophet (Suleiman is, of course, the Arabic form of Solomon). The siege of the city, conducted both by sea and land, was, however, admirably countered by the defensive measures of the new Emperor, Leo the Isaurian, and this extravagant failure undoubtedly strained the resources of the Caliphate for the internal struggles it had now soon to meet. For in the reign of Omar II, the cousin and successor of Suleiman, we reach the turn of the tide. Though Omar was in many respects a capable ruler himself, and though he was followed by several able successors, their efforts were powerless to stem the decay which had set in, both in the fortunes of the Ummeyyad house and of the Arabs as a nation. As not infrequently happens, the glorious outward facade of the Empire appeared for awhile more or less unaffected by this decay ; though the effects were apparent soon enough. Omar was an idealist, a staunch Muslim with an intense admiration for his predecessor, the first Omar ; and his idealism betrayed him to a course of action which, though inspired by the highest motives, was disastrous to the interests of his family and the State. His ideal took the form of attempting to model public policy and the life of the Court on the "good old days" of the tiny and primitive capitals of Arabia proper. A more unsuitable model for a great imperial system could hardly, perhaps, have been selected. The Caliph publicly prided himself upon selecting his officials rather for their godliness than their brains ; but the result, as might have been expected, was not to the advantage of his subjects. Anxious to propagate Islam among his non-Muslim populations he offered to all new converts all the liberties and exemptions from taxation promised them by the first Omar ; in other words, he laid it down that they should automatically enjoy equality with the Arabs themselves. Though undoubtedly in harmony with original Islamic teaching, this ordinance was most unacceptable to the Arabs, and produced results among the

new and "Gentile" Muslims by no means anticipated by its author. Long kept to their own districts and tasks by the orders of various provincial governors, they now began to flock to the cities, where they joined the crowds of idle "clients" of rich Arab families, forming an admirable material for the machinations of plotters and revolutionaries. Instead of entertaining gratitude to the Caliph for his clemency, the clients, old and new, considered that they had obtained bare justice, and set to work to re-double their underground attacks upon their haughty and detested Arab masters. But the latter, though in many cases idle, improvident and unworthy of their position, formed in fact the corner stone upon which the whole fabric of the Empire was reared. A wise statesmanship would have recognised this, and have taken steps to strengthen rather than weaken their position, while perhaps initiating what measures were possible to educate them to a consciousness of their duties and responsibilities. Unfortunately, to the doctrinaire Omar, surrounded by *mullas* and holy men, and living in an atmosphere of pious gloom, such an outlook would have appeared mere worldly wisdom. He alienated the Arabs, and did not make the Gentiles any the less discontented. The revenue suffered considerably, for the new regulations, coupled with various new indignities placed on the followers of non-Muslim faiths, produced a tremendous rush of conversion, which automatically decreased the revenues payable by the "protected" communities. New sources of revenue had to be tapped, which meant the levying of taxes on a much more general plan than before. This further alienated the Arabs, who had hitherto practically escaped taxation altogether, and annoyed the new converts, who were now faced with taxation which they had partly changed their religion to avoid. Thus the area of potential discontent, already dangerously large in so cosmopolitan and recently settled an empire, was immeasurably increased. Already, in the reign of Omar's immediate successor, Yazid II, two serious rebellions broke out among the clients, the Khorasanians of eastern Persia and the Berbers of North Africa both refusing to pay the new taxes, from which they claimed, as Muslims, to be legally exempt. Similar trouble

showed itself in India, resulting in the temporary evacuation of Hind (the eastern province) by the Arabs. The obvious difficulty with which the rebellions were suppressed offered eloquent testimony to the growing weakness of the State, which was now emphasized by the revival of inter-tribal disputes among the Arabs. In Irak differences between the Kais and various Yemenite tribes, particularly the Azd, who were very powerful at the moment, were continually threatening the general peace ; and, owing to the administrative hold which Irak had upon Persia and the East, these differences were reflected over a vast area. The Government, too, had to deal with two pretender-Caliphs in Irak, the second of whom was a grandson of Hosein "the martyr" ; like his more celebrated grandfather, he had to pay for his misplaced trust in the Kufans to whom he had committed his cause. A later Arab rebel of Khorassan, one Harith of the Beni Tamim, is notable in that his army was largely composed of Turks, which showed the extent to which the revolutionary bodies were leaning on foreign and barbarian aid. Harith was also the first rebel to use the black flag, which subsequently became the standard of all the Shiah revolutionary sects, and eventually of their successful supplanters, the Abbassids.

Yazid II was succeeded by his brother Hisham, an able statesman of marked balance of mind, whose ministrations might, had they come earlier, have saved the Empire. As it was, his reign practically consisted of one long attempt to deal in detail with the fires of rebellion which threatened to engulf each and every corner of his vast dominions. These continued troubles had the effect of putting a stop at last to the further enlargement of the Caliphate. The military machine, clogged with the dust of discord and intrigue, was beginning to run down. Though the Arab armies continued to inflict defeats upon the Byzantines, and conquered the wild Khazar tribes of north-eastern Persia, no permanent additions were made to the Empire ; and the invasion of southern France by joint Arab-Berber forces operating from Spain was checked by the reverse at Tours at the hands of the Frankish leader Charles Martel, and permanently ended by the Berber revolt which broke out shortly afterwards in

Africa. The latter trouble originated by taxation disputes and aggravated by the accidental refusal of the Caliph to receive in audience a deputation bearing the rebels' grievances, took two full years to quell, and was followed by several further Berber risings both in Africa and Spain. In the meanwhile Hisham, perhaps embittered with the constant outbreaks and persistent discontent, was tending to withdraw himself more and more from the public gaze, deserting Damascus for his country palace on the edge of the desert. This course made him still more unpopular, as did his efforts at land reclamation and other public works, the huge expense of which was considered unwarranted. When he died, after an uphill reign of twenty years, it must have been with feelings of some relief at the laying down of a tremendous and perhaps impossible task. For the sands were now clearly running out ; the new ruler Walid, the son of Yazid II and nephew of Hisham, had spent most of his life with the desert tribes and in sporting pursuits, and though talented was hardly fitted to take the helm at such a stormy time as this ; nor did he gain much chance to show what he was made of, for he had been but a few months on the throne when he was assassinated, the victim to a tribal vengeance which had followed him since a youth. And with Walid II the glory of the Ummeyyads passed, and the first, purely Arab, phase of empire began to travel rapidly towards its close.

The conspiracy which actually brought about Walid's death was headed by a son of Walid I named Yazid, who was supported by the Kalb and other Yemenite tribes. Taking advantage of the absence in Africa of the main Syrian army, the conspirators seized the Caliph at his country residence, and simultaneously entered Damascus. Walid died courageously, with a Koran on his knee, in imitation of his predecessor, the Caliph Othman. With the exception of two small rebellions, Yazid met with little immediate opposition, but his triumph was ruinous to the fortunes of his family. His dependence on merely tribal support revived the hot embers of the Kalbite-Kaisite quarrel; and the very success of his rebellion against his cousin revealed to the world the lack of unity within the Ummeyyad

clan itself. Add to this the fact that he was suspected of holding unorthodox religious opinions—an unpardonable offence in the head of a theocratic State—and there is little wonder that even the most faithful supporters of the Ummeyyad fortunes began to fall away. As usually happens when disorganization occurs in a strongly centralized government, the distant provinces began to show the first signs of throwing off the yoke. The amirs of Spain ceased to pay tribute ; the governor of Africa began to assume almost regal honours ; the Indian provinces revolted, and Khorassan showed signs of restlessness. In less than six months Yazid died, leaving as his heir his brother Ibrahim who was, however, never acknowledged as Caliph in any country but Syria. The murder of Walid II had angered many of his nearer relatives who, headed by a distant cousin named Merwan, had collected a considerable army for the purpose of attacking Yazid when his death intervened. Hurrying forward into Syria, Merwan put forward the claims of the boy sons of Walid II ; but it was found that the young princes had in the meanwhile been captured and murdered by the Kalbite supporters of Yazid, and Merwan's following now urged him to proclaim himself Caliph. Finally he consented and ascended the throne ; the last of the Ummeyyads to occupy it, and the last Caliph of any line to hold sway over the whole world of Islam.

Of the political organization, as of the social life, of this first Arab Empire, we know little except in outline. We may surmise, however, that the government was conducted much on the lines that Arab government has always been conducted everywhere. The Caliph, though monarch of half the known world, was far from being either a Roman Emperor or a Persian king of kings. The Caliphs of Medina and the earlier monarchs in Damascus resembled rather magnified Arab shaikhs ; though due deference was paid to them in the council chamber, the mosque or public places, they were on terms of complete familiarity with their equals, and were accessible to their inferiors. Probably the Caliph, passing through the bazaar, would be assailed by a petitioner with no more flattering title than " father " or " lord." Abdul Malik and Walid I undoubtedly made

some effort to increase the majesty of the throne by the introduction of more pomp and outward show; Walid II increased the privacy of the *harim* and the private life of the monarch, and borrowed the pernicious institution of eunuchs from the Roman Byzantine court. The Arab aristocracy, including the Caliph, lived much in the way that their ancestors had lived, except that they had very much larger financial resources. Sport, tribal quarrels and poetry were their great amusements; strong drink, though banned by the Koran, was freely indulged in, sometimes openly; popular poets, singers and dancers could earn fabulous sums, provided that their morals did not prevent them obeying every whim of their masters.¹ The middle classes, especially the traders and business men, probably enjoyed more wealth and freedom than ever before. The first Arab conquests were probably too rapid to have any seriously destructive effect on commerce, and the quick growth of the Empire offered to enterprise an enormously increased area under one government. No modern country even, except Russia and the United States, offers such advantages in this direction as this great empire, stretching in one unbroken line from the Pyrenees to the Indus. The working classes, in the modern sense of the term, were confined to the free cultivators in the country and the artificers and small tradesmen in the towns, for all menial work was done by slaves. The extraordinary success of the constant intrigues against the government suggests that there was a large class of people with time on their hands and little work to do, both among the rich and the poor. The pension system, under which every Muslim was entitled to a share in the booty of the foreign wars, paid to him for convenience in the form of a regular sum, would account for much of this; under Walid I there was said to be as many as 45,000 of these annuitants in Damascus alone.² These gentry spent most of their time in the tea-shops and the out-buildings of the mosques, where they were continually in

¹ For a picture of social life under the Ummeyyads, see Von Kremer: "Culturgeschichte des Orients"; or the English adaptation, by S. Khuda Bukhsh, entitled, "The Orient under the Caliphs"; Calcutta, 1920.

² De Goeje; Frag. Hist. Arab: Vol. I, 5.

touch with merchants from all parts of the Empire and other travellers, many of them agents or spies of one or other of the endless underground organizations which existed in this strange and hectic period. One characteristic of the desert the Arabs brought to Damascus and every city they occupied ; the members of the various tribes lived severely alone, in quarters specially marked out, which were often divided by walls and gates of their own from the other quarters of the town. The non-Muslim minorities, Christians and Jews and so forth, were also compelled to live in their own quarters. Each quarter had its own shaikh or headman, just as on the desert, who was responsible to the Government for the peace, cleanliness and good behaviour of his own people. In return, he was consulted by the Government when any matter touching his quarter or its inhabitants came under survey. Arab imperial administration, in fact, was patriarchal, and probably resembled that of Charlemagne or the early Russian Czars rather than any other European examples. The fact that the *terrain* covered was rich and distinguished, and the fact, too, that government throughout had a religious tinge, gave it a marked individuality of its own. The Caliph had, among his other duties, to lead the prayers in the cathedral mosque, and, at the Friday congregational service, to read the *khutbah* or address. All public life, in fact, centred round religion, to an extent even greater than in mediæval Europe, for in this case the Pope and the Emperor were combined in one and the same person. It was partly this inter-dependence of government and the social system with religion which enabled Jews and Christians to rise to such power in the State ; for they were often in a position to render the Caliphs service such as no Muslim could have undertaken. How far the later judicial system of Islam was evolving, and what exact form its evolution was taking, we do not know ; the zeal of the later Abbassid historians has been sufficient to blot out all but the principal political facts of this period. That the Arab hold over much of the Empire was vague and ill-defined seems to be proved by the known fact that the arabization of many of the provinces including Egypt and the Berber sea-board of Africa, had made little progress

even in Abbassid times. We should be wrong, too, if we pictured it in the shape and colours of the later Islamic despotisms, the Baghdad Caliphate or the later Turkish, Persian and Mamluk regimes, the type of social regime portrayed for all time in the stories of the Thousand and One Nights. Possibly Saladin, though not himself an Arab, was more of the tradition of the first Arab conquerors than any of their other successors, and through the Crusaders' tales of him we may perhaps catch something of the atmosphere of Ummeyyad times. A crude world of fighting, sport, honour and the trappings of religion ; a fairly good world for a man, not so good, perhaps, for his womenfolk ; a world with a slightly Elizabethan flavour, where poet marched with soldier, and the merchant's apprentice of to-day might be the provincial governor of to-morrow.

Nevertheless, one turns from the Ummeyyad period with a feeling of some disappointment. These first Arabs had such opportunities, seemed capable of such great things—did, in fact, within certain limits, achieve so much. To build up so great an empire in under half a century is in itself no mean task ; to endow it with a central idea on which the whole society of its varied peoples should be built up showed colonizing ability of the very highest order. That so much of the work of these first Arabs should have survived until to-day is proof of the talent with which it was executed. The Arabs did not only conquer ; they persuaded the conquered peoples to copy them, and gradually to adopt their language, habits and ideas. Not only that, but they drove them so deep down that their successors have never been able to eradicate them. Where the Arab laid his hand—Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, North Africa, Morocco—there is his mark quite clearly seen to-day, in spite of the efforts of Persian, Turk, French, British and Spanish to remove it ; only in the European countries which he conquered has he been completely eliminated, and then only by a policy of conscienceless extermination. Perhaps, in spite of his crude habits and his obvious political failures, we must after all grant him to be about the most successful imperial colonizer that history affords. Rome, Greece, Babylon, Persia remain but as great memories ;

but Damascus, Mecca, Medina are not only living to-day much the same life that they have always lived, but reflect themselves in a thousand mirrors set throughout the middle seas. If true imperial power be deemed to rest in the permanent impression of one nation's ideals upon a vast multitude of its fellows, then of all imperialists the Arab should rest the most content.

CHAPTER IV

THE DECLINE AND FALL

THOUGH we have, for our own convenience, emphasized the dividing line between the first national Arab Empire and the second international, Islamic political system which followed and sprang out of it, it must not be thought that any such abrupt division was apparent to the Arabs or any other inhabitants of the Empire living at the time. The civil wars, it is true, resulted in great obvious changes, a change of dynasty, a change of capital, and the loss of certain of the outlying provinces, notably Spain. But though the Abbassids won their success with the aid chiefly of non-Arab troops, they were still an Arab dynasty, with all the national prestige attaching to descendants of an uncle of the Prophet ; they came not as conscious destroyers of the Arab power, but as men who hoped to build it up and increase it. For some time at least they even hoped to make good the loss of Spain. It was only after they had been on the throne for some years—in the reign of Harun ar-Rashid and his immediate successors—that the full extent of the new foreign influences, first Persian and later Turkish, became apparent. And by then it was too late, for the huge, unwieldy Empire was already beginning to dissolve naturally into the component national parts existing before the coming of the first Arab conquerors.

Thus it is a gradual passage that we now take from the days when Islam and Arabism were coterminous and almost the same thing to a new Islam in which political unity has been sacrificed to the independent ambitions of a score of different states, some of them still of considerable size and importance, many of them non-Arab, but all linked still by an essential unity of culture carried on in the Arabic

tongue, and by a sense of loyalty to the Caliph who for centuries after he had lost all political power, still remained the outstanding figure in the Islamic firmament.

Merwan, the last Ummeyyad Caliph, was an able military leader and clever politician, and for a few months it seemed that he might even at this late hour succeed in pulling things round ; but events, as it turned out, were too much for him. His mother had been a slave girl, and he was thus despised by many of the aristocratic relatives whose support was vital to him ; and he made the initial mistake of transferring the capital from Damascus to Harran, in northern Irak, thus forfeiting the support of the Syrians, whose loyalty had always been the foundation of the Ummeyyad position. He was compelled, too, owing to the Kalbite connections of the late Caliph, to enlist Kaisite support, and thus to add more fuel to that tribal fire which it was essential to allay. Syria met him with rebellion instead of support, and Irak and Persia grew more and more lawless and unsettled. Kaisite and Kalbite were now raiding each other's territory, now combining against the Rabi'a tribes which, led by the Shaiban, had taken advantage of the administrative confusion to terrorize all Irak. Finally Merwan himself had to enter the field against them, and his utter defeat of them in two terrific engagements seemed at first sight to guarantee him some chance of a respite from political trouble.

But Persia and the East had by now been cut off from the central government too long to be brought back by any but the sternest measures. Khorassan and the central Asiatic provinces had already dissolved into almost independent principalities. Here, again, the Kaisite-Kalbite quarrel fatally compromised the Arab cause. It was impossible to get the Arabs to combine to save the Empire, but the native Muslims were continually preparing for their opportunity. When it came, unfortunately for the Arabs, they found a leader of genius, one Abu Muslim, a man of obscure birth who had worked up to the control of one of the Shiah sects. By playing on the mutual hostility of the Arab princes, he managed to capture Merv, and soon had a large army at his back. The Arabs fled precipitately, their

eastern dominion gone, and Abu Muslim, slowly consolidating his position, advanced gradually nearer the heart of the Empire. Meanwhile the Caliph had guessed rightly that Shiah and Alid propaganda was the animating force behind the movement, and had placed the leading members of the Alid family under arrest. But he had no outward cause to suspect the Abbassids who, trading on their close relationship to the Alids, were in reality in close alliance with Abu Muslim. When the triumphant Shiah forces at last entered Irak and captured Kufa, it was announced that the new "Mahdi" or Shiah Messiah would be revealed to the people. The chiefs of the army were first initiated and sworn to allegiance. Then the Mahdi was presented to the people of the city ; but he was not a descendant of Ali, but one Abu'l Abbas, the present titular head of the Abbassid family. Too late the Shiah and Alid leaders realized that they had been tricked into supporting a rebellion against the reigning Caliph on behalf of a man and a party not of their own choosing. In their fury, they would have been prepared to throw in their lot with the Caliph ; but it was already too late. Merwan, advancing into Irak with the imperial army, was decisively defeated by Abu Muslim near the Greater Zab, and forced to flee first to Syria and later to Egypt, where he died. Abu'l Abbas was left the sole Caliph in the field, the conqueror of friends and enemies alike.

Thus was ushered in the second Empire, the Empire of the neo-Muslims, in which the Arabs form only one of many races, and the support of the Arabs is no longer essential to the heads of the State. Persian and Turkish mercenaries, many of them slaves or of slave origin and led by slaves, take the place of the proud tribal levies on whose strong arms the Empire had been built up. No longer do the Arab cities, Mecca, Medina, Kufa, Basrah, Damascus, exercise metropolitan position ; the new Baghdad comes into being, a cosmopolitan capital in which Persian is heard as often as Arabic, and in whose vast bulk there are whole quarters of barbaric foreigners, leading their own lives and speaking their own tongues. The Caliphs become Persian autocrats of the old traditional style—typified by the figure

of Harun ar-Rashid in the Arabian Nights—oriental despots ruling a huge dominion by guile and corruption as much as by strength of will, hemmed in by a Court of Byzantine magnificence, resting on mercenary soldiers and supported by ministers who were little else but slaves. Even those who cultivate Arab manners and make the most use of the Arabic tongue are in many cases no longer Arabs themselves; few of the legalists, philosophers, historians, poets, story-tellers who adorned the Court of Baghdad and made the Arabic language one of the most prolific in literature in the world could boast the blood of Arabia. Persians, Greeks, Jews, native Christians and even heathen found in a rapidly-developing civilization opportunities for personal advancement which the less subtle and more manly Arab might despise; and he in return consoled himself by retiring to the desert or Arabia proper, where the old gentlemanly life of pastoral commerce and tribal raid might be resumed; or sought to solace wounded vanity in some distant colony, where the weakened arm of the new Caliphate could not touch him. For the unity of the Empire was now definitely broken. Though the Caliphs of Baghdad were masters of a vast dominion, it was by no means the whole of Islam; and it was a dominion that lessened age by age, and almost reign by reign, until finally it disappeared altogether. From the first, Spain and the West were independent of the new Abbassid Caliphs; their hold on Africa was precarious, and Egypt, Palestine and even Syria they lost in the course of their first century of power. Only in the East did their dominion hold, and even continue to expand, among those non-Arab people on whose support the dynasty mainly leaned.

It is thus no longer necessary, or even practicable, to trace the fortunes of the Empire as a whole; our purpose being rather to trace the fortunes of the Arabs in the various independent countries into which the Empire broke up, seeing that it is with the Arabs themselves that we are primarily concerned. We shall thus be compelled from now onwards to deal with each country, or group of countries, separately; beginning with what we will call for convenience the "home provinces"—that is to say, Arabia

proper, with the neighbouring Palestine, Irak and Syria—which formed in the days of expansion the heart of the Empire, and are even to-day generally recognized to be predominantly Arab in blood, language and habits. Egypt, in itself one of the most intriguing studies in the world from the point of view of the political theorist, deserves separate treatment ; as also do *Ifrikiyah* (the north African coast), the West and Spain. The old original eastern provinces comprising Persia, Khorassan, Trans-Oxiana and northern India may now be ignored, for the reason that any pretence of Arab dominion in the East was finally shattered by the victories of Abu Muslim, and there has never been any question of its resuscitation. It may be remarked in passing, however, that there is a good deal of Arab blood in all the eastern Muslim countries, even including China ; for where the Arab seafarers and colonists went they remained, inter-marrying with the local people, and training them in Arabian ideals and mode of life. All the “sayids” and “sharifs,” for example, who are so numerous in all Islamic countries, must obviously be of Arab origin, since they claim descent from the Prophet ; and the frequent occurrence of the Arab physical type, and of Arabic family names, bear witness to the extraordinary talent of the Arabs for establishing and re-creating themselves in far distant climes.

For roughly five centuries the fortunes of the “home provinces” were bound up more or less with those of the Abbassid Caliphate. Once securely seated on the throne, the dynasty entered upon a first period of great brilliance, dating from the proclamation of Abu'l Abbas in the great mosque of Kufa in November, 749, to the death of the Caliph Wathik in 827. This period covers the reigns of nine rulers, of whom the second, Mansur, the brother and successor of Abu'l Abbas, was the real founder of the family fortunes, and the creator of the new capital of Baghdad. The period reaches its zenith in the reigns of Harun ar-Rashid (a grandson of Mansur) and his son Mamun, under whom Baghdad became the most brilliant capital in the world, adorned by a variety of talent in administration, art and literature which has seldom been equalled in any other single city. Throughout this period the Arab

influence at Court was completely eclipsed by that of the Persians, who were led by the famous family of the Barmecides. The latter occupied the position of *wazir* (vizier) or Minister-in-chief to several successive Caliphs. The fall of the Barmecides under Harun led to renewed tension between the Arabs and the Persians, which came to a head in the civil war between two of Harun's sons, the Caliphs Amin and Mamun. The victory of the latter, who had a Persian mother and upbringing, and relied upon Persian troops and Persian officials, finally sealed the fate of the Arab party in Baghdad. Meanwhile a new power had been slowly arising in the State ; the Turkish mercenaries, who possessed such fine military qualities that the Government began to rely more and more upon them for the preservation of order. The inevitable result followed. The Turks, realizing their power, developed into a kind of prætorian guard, which was only kept in some sort of subjection under monarchs who possessed strong personal qualities. The provinces, in the meanwhile, began to fall more and more under the control of local families of governors who, by bribery and other influence at Court, secured the local succession from father to son ; a dangerous precedent, the results of which were clearly to be seen in the second period from the Caliph Mutawakkil (the successor of Wathik) to Mutamid (847-870). During all this time the reins were in feeble hands and the real rulers of the State were successive Turkish captains of the guard. Their influence, however, stopped usually at the borders of Irak ; the other provinces either went into open rebellion, as in the case of Morocco (under the Idrisid dynasty), Ifrikyiah (under the Aghlabids) and Persia (under the Tahirids), or, as in the case of Egypt and Syria under the Turk Ahmad bin Tulun, remained nominally loyal but actually independent.

The reigns of Mutadid (892) and Ali Muktafi (902) saw a revival in the power of the Caliphate, signified by the return of Syria and Egypt to dependence on Baghdad. The long reign of Muktadir (908), however, began once more a definite decline, and the three following Caliphs were mere puppets in the hands of designing " Mayors of the Palace."

In A.D. 945 these were succeeded by the Persian family of Buyids, who occupied Baghdad and ruled the whole eastern Empire through the Caliphs. After rather more than a century of power, they were superseded by the Turkish Seljuk sultans, a warrior family who succeeded in reuniting almost the whole of the old Abbassid realm (including Egypt), and adding to it large parts of Anatolia. The gradual decline of the Seljuks produced a brief revival of Caliphal power which was, however, limited to Irak and parts of Arabia and Syria. The fact that the simultaneous attacks of the European Crusaders were countered, not by the troops of the Caliph of Islam, but by the Mamluk slave-monarchs of Egypt, showed to what a low pitch the Abbassid fortunes had now fallen. The end came with the arrival of the Mongol Hulagu Khan, grandson of the great Jenghiz Khan, who captured and destroyed Baghdad and had the last Abbassid Caliph, Mustasim, put to death. A cadet branch of the family, however, escaped to Egypt, where it was set up by the Mamluks as a dynasty of puppet Caliphs. In the following centuries the tribe of Ottoman Turks gradually rose to the supreme position in Islam, and their rulers assumed the title of Caliph; when Egypt fell to them, they consequently abolished the puppet Abbassid Caliphate, the last of the line, Mutawakkil, dying in Cairo in 1538. The Turkish Caliphate lasted until 1924, when it was brought to an end by a decision of the Grand National Assembly at Angora.

Throughout the Abbassid period, the history of the home provinces is a glorious but stormy one. Owing to the fact that their fates were not always connected or even similar, brief allusion will have to be made to each country separately, commencing with Irak which, as the province containing the capital, Baghdad, and having also the largest proportion of wealth and culture within its borders, deserves to receive the first consideration.

For all the five centuries Irak remained loyal, in the main, to the Abbassids, although the weakness of the Baghdad government led at times to the practical division of the country into a number of local principalities, which on occasion could show more strength in the field than could

Baghdad itself. The Hamdanid family of Mosul, for instance, kept an almost royal state, and more than once defeated attempts of the contemporary Caliphs to reduce them to order. Sadaka of Hillah for a short period (*circa* 1100) disputed with Baghdad the control of territory reaching almost to the western outskirts of the capital city itself. The rise of these various Arab princely families has more than a passing interest, for it symbolized a recrudescence of Arab national activity, which had for some three centuries been practically negligible. Both the dynasties mentioned were, it is worth noting, of tribal origin; the tribe still held the place of honour in the Arab political world. The Hamdanids were of the Beni Taghlib (a North Arabian Rabi'a tribe, closely related to the Bakr); in addition to the principality of Mosul, they founded a second dynasty at Aleppo, which played a considerable part in the Crusades, and became (as did Mosul) a notable centre of art and literature. (Mutannabi, perhaps the greatest of all Arab poets, was a client of the Hamdanid prince of Aleppo.) Sadaka of Hillah belonged to the Beni Asad, a famous Modari tribe, which after the Muslim conquest had its own quarter in Kufa and played a considerable part in the disturbances of the later period. Hillah was Sadaka's own foundation, largely built from the bricks of ancient Babylon close by; it developed into a successor of Kufa, which had been slowly decaying for a long time. When Sadaka's son Dubeis was defeated by the Caliph Mustashid (1123), the power of the Asad in Irak declined and that of the Muntafik (another Modari tribe, a branch of the Hawazin) took its place. The latter tribe has continued to hold its position in southern Irak until modern times.

Of the cities of Irak, Baghdad, as the capital of the Empire, gained a supreme position in the country which it has always since succeeded in retaining. The city was the natural successor of a long line of distinguished metropolitan towns, Kish, Babylon, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, which dotted the *Sawad* or "Black Lands" of the great plain lying between the Euphrates and the Tigris. From them she inherited the commercial pre-eminence which central Irak—the ancient Babylonia—has enjoyed since the dawn of history. From

the Arabs she took the prestige which the presence of the Caliph and his ruling Ministers conferred ; from her cosmopolitan population and from the fortunate accident of her birth at a time when a great civilization was passing from youth to manhood, she acquired the astonishing power of producing long lines of distinguished men in all departments of life, which so distinguished her in her prime. It is noteworthy that, in spite of the very numerous large cities which have spoken the Arabic language, from Basrah to Cordova and Damascus to modern Cairo, considerably more than half of the very rich literature for which that tongue is famous was produced by the brilliant society which gathered round the Court of the Abbassid Caliphs on the banks of the Tigris. Nor was her output of literature affected for some time by the political decline of the Empire ; and when at last it did cease, it left her undisputed mistress of the classical age of Arabic.

Of the other cities, Basrah held second place to the new capital, though necessarily forfeiting some of the influence which it held under the earlier Caliphs, when it was the seat of government for all southern Irak and large portions of Persia as well. Commerce rather than politics absorbed the interests of the town in Abbassid times. As the chief eastern port of Irak, and the place where Baghdad's river-borne trade was transhipped into ocean-going vessels, Basrah became a great trading centre, and supported a lavish and wealthy society of which glimpses can be seen in some of the tales of the "Arabian Nights." (Sindbad the Sailor, it will be remembered, was a Basrah man.) The merchant princes of the city traded throughout Arabia, across to the African littoral, to India and Ceylon, and even as far as China. It was from Basrah that the colony of Arab merchants was dispatched to the Chinese coast by the Caliph Mansur, which laid the foundations of Islam in China. The city also gave to the world several names of literary note : Hassan of Basrah, the grammarian and theologian ; al-Ashari, the great schoolman and founder of the later orthodox Muslim canonical system ; and Harari, the famous romantic writer. The well-known scientific society, the *Akhwan as-Safa* or "Brothers of Purity," whose written

works formed a kind of mediæval encyclopædia, was also a Basrah product. With its intricate network of canals, its commercial power and its elegant and not always very reputable society, Basrah under the early Abbassids formed a kind of large eastern Venice, set among palm-trees and girt with luxuriant gardens. The decay of the central power, however, affected the fortunes of the town considerably. The Zanj rebellion of 871, during which the whole of southern Irak was dominated by bands of escaped negro slaves, brought grave loss to Basrah ; and the long domination of the Carmathians, a fanatical and powerful religious body which defied the Government for many years, caused further trouble to the town. Finally, the growth of the Muntafik power in southern Irak brought Basrah under the strong tribal influence which has been a feature of the town's more modern history.

The general history of Irak as a whole during the Abbassid period can be dismissed in a few words. The country commenced the epoch as the most prosperous province of the whole Empire, containing the capital and a number of important minor cities, and famous for such a wealth of gardens and farms that it was said that not a yard of agricultural land was wasted. It finished it as a wild and disconnected country of several large towns and agricultural belts separated from each other by huge tracts of pasture land and waste, which the bedouin tribes of the Syrian desert tended increasingly to dominate. Central administration was uncertain, and liable to be upset at any moment by the attacks of neighbouring powers or of the various roving Turkish and Mongol bands which continued, in the increasing disorganization of the times, to live by raiding any settled lands which were within their area of attack. The Caliph in Baghdad still remained as the respected head of Islam, but the effective power of his officers did not penetrate at times very many hours' ride from the capital itself. The old prosperity which had been Mesopotamia's almost since the dawn of history had already begun to depart, under the stress of years of misgovernment, growing weakness, and the reversion of the sown to the desert. The neglect of the

minor canals effectively helped the economic deterioration of the country, for Irak, like Egypt, lives by irrigation. In short, most of the conditions which tend to dislocate a highly-strung and artificial civilization were present in Irak during the last centuries of Abbassid rule, and it is scarcely surprising that the picture is the dismal one of gradual but continuous decline. The final *coup de grâce* came in 1258, when the Mongols entered the country in force, after conquering most of Persia. In a short campaign the Caliphal forces were completely overcome, and Baghdad was entered and sacked, the last Caliph, Mustasim, being put to death. The last link with the past was broken, and though the bulk of Irak's population remained Arab or Arabic-speaking, the country lost permanently even the pretence of an Arab Government. Not, indeed, until 1921 was a native administration again to be attempted.

If Syria shared to a great extent the unhappy fate of her sister province, it was perhaps more limited and less wholly disastrous in final effect, for the reason that Syria is at once a poorer and a less artificial country than Irak. (In this connection, we may note that Palestine is included in Syria in this survey, for at this time she enjoyed no separate existence.) Having few rivers and a comparatively ample rainfall, Syria is not totally dependent on irrigation and the vagaries of Government; on the other hand, she cannot aspire to the extraordinary fertility which characterizes her neighbour when properly ruled and administered. Her economic history in this as in all epochs is therefore more equable and less disturbed. Nevertheless she suffered greatly, largely from causes outside her own control. The triumph of the Abbassids, and the final removal of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad, were heavy blows; she, who had been the metropolitan province, now became merely the western outlet of Irak. A natural political result of the suspicion with which she was regarded by the new Government was a *rapprochement* with the province on her other side—Egypt. Though separated from Egypt, as from Irak, by a desert, she has also a connecting link, the Mediterranean. Thus it is not surprising to find the Tulunid governors of Egypt, as they begin to feel them-

selves more secure against interference from Baghdad, beginning to cast envious eyes on Syria. By 889 the Tulunid influence was so firmly established that their Egyptian coinage was in circulation in Syria, though this had not been brought about without serious military clashes with Baghdad sometimes on Syrian soil. In the tenth century the Tulunids were succeeded by the Ikshid family, and they in turn fell before the Fatimids, or Shiah Caliphs of Cairo, whose power had been built up in Africa. The hold over Syria to which they succeeded when they conquered Egypt was never, however, made very secure, and the Seljuks succeeded in bringing the country back to the allegiance of Baghdad. With the decline of the Seljuks came the Crusades, which brought fearful disaster to Syria. The objectives of the Crusaders were on Syrian soil, as were the majority of the battles fought ; and for these doubtful privileges the country had to pay handsomely.

The immediate cause of the Crusades was the friction which had been growing up for many years between the Christians of the west and the various Muslim rulers of the holy land. The actual cause, or causes, lay much deeper ; in the general fear throughout Europe of a Muslim invasion ; in the growth of an international, European spirit, now for the first time beginning to feel its feet ; in the economic need to get into closer touch once more with the East ; and in the political ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church. In the early days of Islam, the relations of the Muslims with western Christendom had been of a distinctly friendly nature. Harun ar-Rashid, for instance, recognized the " special position " of Charlemagne as the protector of western Christians on pilgrimage in the holy land, and granted several important concessions. These were, however, revoked at the beginning of the eleventh century by the Fatimid Caliph Hakim of Cairo, and thereafter access to the holy places on the part of Europeans became increasingly difficult, largely owing to the disturbed condition of Syria, which was only partially mitigated by the Seljuk regime. The growing pressure of the Seljuks on the Roman Byzantine Empire of Constantinople, which, like its one-time Arab rival, had sunk heavily in the scale, led to an

appeal for help to Pope Gregory VII by the Emperor Michael VII, which was repeated twenty years later by the Emperor Alexius ; there followed immediately the famous speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont, which led directly to the First Crusade. And Clermont, it should be noted, is on French soil ; from the first the European base of the Crusades was France. Thus was forged that historic French-Syrian connection, which has continued to form a recognized danger point in international relations into modern times. Its value to France has been rather of a sentimental than a practical nature ; to Syria it has been of disastrous consequence, alike in the middle ages and in the twentieth century.

Once the Crusaders had reached the East, the course of their campaigns was determined as much by political as by religious motives. At least three of the Christian princes held secret ambitions to found independent principalities ; while the Muslims were handicapped by the continual struggle for control of Syria between the Seljuks (representing the orthodox Abbassid Caliph of Baghdad) and the heretic Fatimid Caliph of Cairo. Rivalry between various members of the Seljuk family also contributed to the general political confusion. As a result, no general defence was made against the invaders ; Antioch fell in the summer of 1098, and Jerusalem twelve months afterwards. The whole Muslim and Jewish population of the holy city was put to the sword, and the Christian soldiers, led by a bishop, pressed on through rivers of blood to the sepulchre of their Lord. On Christmas Day, 1100, was founded the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, which lasted eighty-seven years until conquered by the famous Saladin ; but Jerusalem was again secured for the Latins in 1229 by negotiations conducted by the Emperor Frederick II. This second occupation started in the strangest manner, with the holy city placed under a Papal interdict, due to the fact that the Emperor was at the time under a ban of excommunication ; it lasted but fifteen years. The political gains of the Crusades from the European point of view were thus negligible ; and their effect on Syria was deplorable. The battlefield for a hundred and fifty years between the orthodox

Muslim power of the East (as represented first by the Seljuks, and later by the Atabegs of Mosul), the heretic Muslim power of the South, Egypt, and the Christian powers of the West, unhappy Syria reverted to her Old Testament rôle of a debated territory between a strong Mesopotamian and a strong Egyptian power, with the added complication of a Western invasion thrown in. Almost on the top of the Crusades came the Mongols, who completed mediæval Syria's ruin.

Syria thus underwent too many vicissitudes during the Abbassid period to admit of discussion of the country's life as a considered whole. The times left many marks, some of which are still visible to-day. It was the age, for instance, of the many strange heretical sects for which the country is so famous, and which possibly represent in some cases attempts by native opinion to adapt orthodox ideas to long-reverenced local pagan creeds. The famous Assassins, though directed from Persia, flourished best on Syrian soil, as do still their spiritual cousins the Ismailis ; the Druses, an offshoot of Fatimid teaching in Cairo, are another heretic body which has survived into modern times. Thus Islam in Syria found much the same fate as Judaism and Christianity before it ; its orthodoxy split on the inexhaustible Syrian love for particularism, which had, in many cases, political as well as spiritual motives behind it.

Socially, the chief point worth noting is the short but brilliant revival of Damascus under the rule of the Zangid Atabeg of Mosul, Nur ud-Din, and his better known successor, Saladin. Though the glory of the city under the latter attracted the attention of the whole contemporary world, and is frequently mentioned in Western writers of the time, it was actually Nur ud-Din who was chiefly responsible for the new spirit which animated the city and turned it for a brief while into a worthy rival of the old Ummeyyad Damascus. Architecture and the arts made rapid strides ; schools were multiplied and a notable literary coterie sprang up, under the leadership of Ibn Asakir, the historian of the city. The dissensions between Saladin's sons brought about an eclipse, which was made general by the later Mongol deluge.

Arabia itself, the remaining "home province" left for our consideration, also suffered heavily under the Abbassid regime. The removal of the capital from Medina first to Kufa (by the Caliph Ali) and later to Damascus (by the Ummeyads), and the failure of Ibn Zubair's rebellion to restore the old order of things, naturally lowered the status of Arabia within the Empire. It was perhaps natural that revolutionary movements should continue to breed here, as they did right into Abbassid times; they were, however, invariably put down. The political atmosphere of Arabia after the Abbassid *coup* tended rather to reflect the disappointment of the Alid party; the Shiah Imams, who were of course, direct descendants of Ali himself, and who were objects of suspicion to several of the early Abbassids, spent much of their time in the country, and probably were in touch at times with revolutionary bodies. Harun ar-Rashid made a bold attempt to win over the holy cities; he publicly led the *haj* to Mecca no less than nine times, and his wife Zobeida built rest-houses for the pilgrims at every caravan station from Baghdad to Mecca. Socially, both the holy cities had already become in the Ummeyad epoch places of retreat for rich men, philosophers, idlers and all who preferred for one reason or another an aristocratic backwater to the main stream of national life. A curious society sprang up; men of true piety and simple faith, drawn by the memories of the early days when existence was frugal and luxury unknown, jostled in the bazaars against sybarites of exquisite and at times degraded taste, whose only true god was their own inclinations. Medina, carrying in its schools of law the full tradition of the early days, and acting as a refuge for political adventurers of all parties; and Mecca, surrounded with handsome villas, and filled with private dancing halls and entertainments of the worst repute, would hardly have been regarded with much favour by the Prophet, had he been able to return to earth. Nevertheless, both cities enjoyed for many years great material prosperity, making a bitter contrast in this respect with the rest of the country, whose bedouin tribes were but poor remnants of once famous confederations, whose centre of gravity had shifted to other lands. The revival of formal religion which

marked the early days of the Abbassid regime brought further grist to the mill of Mecca and Medina, but must have emphasized, to thoughtful Arabians, the lack of any real national life in the country itself.

Before the end of the ninth century, however, Arabia had given birth to a new movement of considerable significance, which for a time restored to her something of her old political position, though it dragged her down eventually into deeper ruin. This was the curious episode of the Carmathians, or followers of Hamdan Karmat, a Shiah sectary whose ideas were closely allied to those of the Fatimids of Cairo, and the Ismailis and Assassins of Syria and Persia. The Carmathians commenced their career in the Yemen, whence they invaded other coast provinces and in 903 captured Bahrein. Three years later they had penetrated across the continent and were threatening Mecca and Medina, though it was not until 930 that they succeeded in capturing them. Their seizure of the holy cities made a profound impression, which was turned to horror by their removal of the famous Black Stone in the Ka'aba to Bahrein. Protests from Baghdad and even from Cairo (whose Fatimid Caliphs the Carmathians professed to acknowledge) were disregarded, though in 939 the Carmathian chief, Abu Tahir, restored the holy relic to its original resting-place, and permitted the resumption of the pilgrimage, on payment of a poll-tax by the pilgrims. The weakness of the Baghdad Government gave them an opportunity to invade Irak, and Basrah was menaced by them for some years. Once they even threatened the capital itself. With the death of Abu Tahir, however, their power rapidly declined, and by the year 1000 they had disappeared as a political force. It is to be noted, however, that their power fell, not to the Caliphal or any other central government, but to the bedouin tribes. The episode of their rise and fall ended, in fact, the phase of Arabian history inaugurated by the coming of the Prophet. The Carmathian occupation of Mecca and Medina destroyed at a blow the wealthy, luxurious, retired and intellectual life which had served to carry on the tradition of earlier days. Old families, some of them priding themselves on direct

descent from the Prophet or the Companions, fled precipitately from these barbarians. The direct connection with the old days was broken. Mecca and Medina were much attenuated when restored to orthodoxy after the Carmathian flood subsided. And in the proved weakness of the Caliphate to protect the holy places had been snapped the one political connection which had bound them to Irak and the outside world. Egypt continued to be closely bound to the holy cities as long as the Fatimid dynasty continued to rule—a proof, perhaps, that the Carmathian doctrines had not entirely died out in the holy land—and even claimed at times a suzerainty, which was, however, strenuously disputed by local *amirs* or princes, usually of Hashimite descent, who aimed at total independence. No military interference was attempted again by the Caliphs of Baghdad. South of the Hijaz, another Shiah body, the Zaidites, were building up the considerable position which they still hold at the present day. In other parts of the country, conditions were reverting to the state of things in existence before the coming of the Prophet. The great national effort which had given the Arabs a mighty empire and the world a new religion had now, in fact, definitely subsided. So far as Arabia itself was concerned, except in so far as the whole population was now nominally Muslim, the thing might never have happened. The innate conservatism of the country had conquered the temporary energy of a few generations. Arabia returned to what she had been before, a land of vast deserts and wide pastures, of great distances and few inhabited places. Here and there were wells and oases, around which the tribes wandered ; here and there a few cities, living an isolated, stunted life, in which the chief object was to maintain independence both of the bedouin and the great imperial governments of the outer Arabian world. The “mother of nations,” her latest brood out in the world, turned over once more and settled down to yet another long slumber.

CHAPTER V

EGYPT AND THE ARABS

WHEN we leave the home provinces of Arabia, Syria and Irak and enter upon a consideration of the case of Egypt, we find ourselves face to face with a problem somewhat different from those of the countries whose past history and present position form our main concern. The home provinces are essentially Arab lands, in that the bulk of their population is of Arab blood, and their minorities are so close to the Arabs in type and social habits as to be easily assimilated by them. Egypt on the other hand, though it formed for several centuries a most important part of the Arab and Islamic Empires, and has been throughout modern times the chief centre of Arab culture, is not itself an Arab land. Such a paradox might surprise in the case of any other country, but Egypt is by common consent the home of paradox. Moreover, we possess in our own Anglo-Saxon world a parallel which can be used to bring the relationship of Egypt to the Arabs very exactly before us. The United States was once an English colony, and English is still its mother tongue. It has attained in modern times to a status which is recognized by the world at large as equal to that of the motherland. In exactly the same way, Egypt was (under the Ummeyyads) an Arab colony, which broke away and was soon (under the later Abbassids) recognized as an equal, independent country. Now imagine a situation, say, two hundred years hence, in which Britain might have entered upon a period of decline, while the United States continued prosperous and full of vigour. The time would inevitably come when America, not in itself a purely British country either racially or politically, would be regarded as the chief centre of English culture, and might even become the home of an English "renaissance." This is precisely the

rôle which Egypt has played in the modern Arab world. Not herself an Arab country, she was fairly extensively colonized by the Arabs, and adopted their language and religion. Not sharing in the general decay which overtook the Empire after she herself had rebelled from it, she became in the later middle ages the only country speaking the Arabic language which retained any pretensions to political importance or cultural activity. In spite of a certain inertia which came upon her, first with the loss of her through trade to the East brought about by the discovery of the Cape route to India, and secondly with the arrival of the Turk, whose presence had a lowering effect on all his provinces, she managed to retain something of both into modern times. It was in Egypt that some, though not all, of the Arab "modernist" aspirations were nursed; it was, and still is, in Egypt that modern Arab thought, art and literature find their greatest expression.

Consequently, though Egypt always has had, and still has, a very close connection with Arab affairs, it must not be forgotten that underneath the Arab structure in the country there has always existed a very large native population, whose physique, habits and ways of thought are absolutely Egyptian. This native population is directly descended from the subjects of the Pharaohs; it has been conquered in turn by Persian, Greek, Roman, Arab, Turk and Englishman. All the conquerors have, no doubt, left their mark in blood as well as in monuments of stone or politics; only the Arabs have left their language, their religion and their large colonies of pure Arab blood. Possibly this is due to the fact that the Arabs alone of the imperial races have hailed from a semi-tropical country, and have thus been able to acclimatize themselves without undue effort; possibly to the close connection and proximity of the two countries. There must have been men from Arabia resident in Egypt centuries before the Arab armies actually invaded the land; the story of Joseph and his brethren is probably typical. Thus the Egyptians would find less difficulty in adapting themselves to the manners of their Arab conquerors than to those of their Persian or European masters. Hence the astonishing way in which Arab life and fashions captured

the country, ousting all memory of the great days of the past, and making mediæval and modern Egypt an entirely new Egypt, dating not to the Pharaohs but only to the coming of Islam.

The conquest of Egypt was, it will be remembered, after those of Irak and Syria one of the earliest achievements of the youthful Arab Empire governed by the Caliphs of Medina. The conqueror was Amr bin al-As, who had previously greatly distinguished himself in the Syrian campaigns, and was, in spite of his advanced age, one of the greatest of the Arab captains. The tradition that he initiated the campaign on his own responsibility is almost certainly untrue; if the Caliph Omar did not directly order it, he was almost certainly informed of it, for he immediately supported Amr with reinforcements under Zubair. As has already been pointed out, there were obvious reasons why an invasion of a country which formed the chief granary for the Hijaz and also outflanked the Arab position in Palestine should be undertaken. The conquest was, with the exception of the city of Alexandria, very rapidly carried out, and the isolation of the latter eventually secured its fall. Like many another conqueror, Amr was not very generously treated by his country; the Caliph Othman abruptly removed him from power, and he lived in retirement until the outbreak of the civil war between Muawiyah and Ali, when a fortunate attachment to the former secured him the governorship of Egypt once more. This time he held it till his death, at the ripe age of ninety. Save for an attempt on the part of the Romans to recapture Alexandria from the sea, and for an expedition against the Nubians with the object of gaining a definite frontier for Egypt on the south (her only exposed flank), nothing very notable occurred in the new province at this stage.¹ A certain amount of Arab immigration took place, chiefly tribal; the Judham (a South Arabian tribe, akin to the Lakhm, who migrated to Sinai and became Christian in pre-Islamic days) entered Egypt with Amr and became very powerful in the country round Alexandria; the

¹ For an account of the conquest in detail, see A. J. Butler, "The Arab Conquest of Egypt"; Oxford, 1902.

Juhaina and the Bali (of the Kuda'a) were removed there by order of the Caliph Omar, because of their conduct in the Hijaz. The most famous of all the Egyptian Arab tribes, however, the Hilal, who headed what was practically a second Arab invasion of Barbary and Morocco in the later middle ages, did not reach the country till the Abbassid period. It was these various tribal immigrations which laid the foundations both of the Arab population in the cities, particularly Cairo, and of the bedouins which still, in typical Arab fashion, lead a life of their own in various parts of the country. Probably, too, they were responsible, much more than the official conquest, for spreading the Arabic language, religion and culture all over Egypt. The Arabs who settled in Egypt, either townsmen or bedouin, must have tended to become egyptianized to some extent ; but the Egyptians became equally or even more arabicized, —a remarkable triumph for the Arabs when the intense conservatism and age-long tradition of the Egyptian countryman is taken into account ; a triumph, too, which has not been repeated by any subsequent conqueror.

Almost as remarkable as the way in which the conservative Egyptian abandoned his language and his traditions, was the ease with which he turned to the new religion. We are not very accurately informed as to the exact form which the progress of Islam took ; but it seems certain that the bulk of the population, with the exception of a certain town-dwelling minority, had within a few decades abandoned Christianity for the faith of the newcomers. Undoubtedly, the decline of the older religion was helped here, as in Syria, by the fact that the bulk of the population were " dissenters," and resented the yoke of the Greek Orthodox Church. The Arab conquerors were hailed as deliverers, and this tended to put the population at once on easy terms with the Muslims, which in turn must have facilitated conversion. The military successes of the Arabs, too, especially in the case of their later African campaigns which were organized from Egyptian soil, would naturally attract support from among the more enterprising of the local population, and would lend glamour to their religion as well as to their habits and language.

Nevertheless, the native Egyptians, or "Copts" as the Arabs pronounced the name, retained a large Christian population throughout the Arab period, which has continued in existence to the present day. Strangely enough, it is amongst Government servants and officials that the Christian tradition remains strongest. The native officials were in the first place taken over *en bloc* by the Arabs from their predecessors. The problem of the Christian civil service became very early on a thorn in the side of the governors, and it is still with them to-day. Though the Government usually protected its Christian servants, it was occasionally forced to give way to the fanaticism of the mob ; but anti-Christian measures seem to have been more honoured in the breach than in the observance, for in a very short time we find Muslim writers making the same complaints. At times, too, the Christians in Government employ seem to have made formal profession of Islam, though to what extent they carried this practice is not clear. The failure of the Arab rulers to islamize the civil service was probably due partly to the fact that the Copts, working together as a close and efficient guild, did their work so well that a wise administrator thought twice before doing anything to unsettle them ; and partly to the discovery that, in a strict theocracy like early Islam, an "infidel" element in Government employ could be extremely useful. It remains a remarkable feature of local Christian psychology that they have as a whole preferred the overlordship of local Muslim masters to that of a foreign Christian power. The help of the Copts might have been invaluable, for instance, to the invading Crusaders ; but it was not even offered. Nor did the French invaders of the early nineteenth century find a very warm welcome from their nominal co-religionists ; and the British have usually found the Copts no easier, to say the least, to deal with than the Muslims. The fact would seem to be that a position of political dependence, though not in our eyes a very honourable one, has certain solid advantages which commended themselves to the Coptic nature ; and that the Christian Egyptians became in the course of time so islamized themselves in all but outward profession of faith, that they preferred a Muslim world in which they felt

at home, even as underlings, to a wholly alien Christian world in which, though nominally free, they might feel ill at ease. In any event, the Copts soon settled down with the Arabs as did their co-religionists of Syria and Irak, in much the same sort of fashion that the Jews have carved out a position for themselves in modern western countries.

Save for a brief reflection of the Ibn Zubair rebellion, during which Egypt for the space of about a year acknowledged the Anti-Caliph of Mecca instead of the Caliph of Damascus, the country was politically quiet throughout the Ummeyyad period. Military activity was concentrated on the occupation of *Ifrikiyah*, the coast of North Africa lying to the west of Egypt, now comprised by the Italian colony of Libya (Tripoli and Cyrenaica), and parts of French Tunis and Algeria. Prosperity seems to have been the rule, and the country had on the whole capable, and at times distinguished, governors, as befitted its importance to the new Empire; the Caliph Abdul Malik, for instance, appointed his own brother to Egypt, with practically absolute powers. The last Ummeyyad Caliph, Merwan, died in Egypt after his flight thither on his defeat by Abu Muslim, and the tragedy of his fall seems to have made a considerable impression upon the local population, for it figures in the literature of the period (notably in the Coptic Christian story of the Apocalypse of Daniel). Under Abbassid rule misgovernment set in. The munificence of the Baghdad court made heavy drains on the provincial revenue, and the local interests of Egypt were frequently, if not always neglected. With the decline of the central power, such a state of things led naturally to the rise of a class of local governors enjoying a semi-independent status, which paved the way for the final breaking-away of Egypt from the Empire in the middle of the tenth century.

The first of these governors, Ahmad bin Tulun, was the son of a Turkish slave, who had been brought to the Baghdad Court, probably, some time during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid. The father, Tulun, must have been a man of ability, for he rose in the end to important positions, and was able to obtain for his son a good general and military education. Ahmad played a negative part in the

intrigues which characterized the Court as the Caliphs began to fall more and more under the thumb of their Turkish captains, but his chance came when a close relative was appointed Governor of Egypt, and selected him as his lieutenant. At first he had power over the army only, but later he managed to combine the exchequer with it, and thus practically to control the country. An order from Baghdad to subdue a Syrian rebel gave him the excuse to purchase a large number of Turkish slaves, and out of these he fashioned a first-class fighting machine. His influence continued to grow until the revival of Caliphal power under Mutamid, when the Caliph's brother Muwaffak, who was at the time the real ruler of the Empire, endeavoured to curb it. But Ahmad had powerful friends at Court, and made skilful use of the division which was well known to exist between the Caliph and his brother. Soon he felt strong enough to refuse to pay tribute to Baghdad, a step which automatically placed at his own disposal considerable extra financial resources, and correspondingly weakened those of the enemy. In 877 the temporary chaos in Syria resulting from the sudden death of a governor gave him an excuse to re-enter that country, and Muwaffak was unable to oppose him. For a time both parties manœuvred for position, Ahmad making overtures to the Caliph in person, while Muwaffak retaliated by appointing another governor of Egypt and Syria. Muwaffak proved powerless, however, to enforce his wishes, and Ahmad had now little to do but to hold on. By 880 he was sufficiently established to have coins minted in his own name.

His immediate successors possessed little of his ability and enterprise, but in spite of this the growing weakness of the Caliphate and the rise of the Carmathian danger in Arabia and Irak guaranteed them a fair amount of freedom from the control of Baghdad. This they used chiefly for the beautification of their capital, Fustat,¹ and

¹ The modern "Old Cairo." Founded originally as an Arab military depot like Kufa and Basrah in Irak, it grew and flourished to a notable extent under the Tulunids. Even the foundation of Cairo by the Fatimids did not affect its position; though burnt down during the Crusades, it was still important enough in the Mamluk period to be made by them the capital of Upper Egypt, Cairo occupying the same position for Lower Egypt. Gradually Cairo superseded it, and nowadays is tending to absorb it.

for the maintenance of their large slave army. Latterly the Tulunids began to suffer from the same political disease as their masters ; local deputies of their own became too powerful and began to assert their own independence. The end came in 905, when a successful general of the Caliph, Muhammad bin Sulaiman, who had previously routed the Carmathians in Syria, marched on Egypt, and entered and largely destroyed Fustat. For the time being the province was recovered for the Crown, which continued to administer it direct from Baghdad.

But soon a new enemy appeared on the scene. The Shiah, who had since early days played a somewhat disruptive rôle in Islam, had, it will be remembered, lately produced some extremely revolutionary sects, of whom the Carmathians, the Ismailis and the Assassins were the most prominent. No doubt this Shiah tendency towards the left had been encouraged by their failure at the time of the Abbassid capture of the Caliphal throne ; cheated of political hopes on which they had placed so much reliance, they would tend to throw themselves, perhaps rather bitterly, into even more extravagant dreams than before. In any case, the more revolutionary Shiah sects gained tremendous followings, and remained a perpetual menace to the Caliphate. Allusion has already been made to the Carmathian uprising in Arabia and the home provinces ; at about the same time a branch of the Ismailis succeeded in establishing itself in North Africa, where its teachings met with an immediate response from the always turbulent Berbers. Finally, the Ismailis overran the whole province of Ifrikiyah, over-turned the Government and established a Shiah Fatimid Caliphate of their own. (The Fatimids took the title from their claimed descent from Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, wife of Ali and mother of Hassan and Hosein). Once the Fatimid Empire had established itself, the temptation to attack Egypt became irresistible ; and though two violent attacks were beaten off by the Government troops, the danger still remained. And the cost to Egypt was severe ; the continual political crises to which Baghdad was subject at this time threw the defence of the country on to its own local resources, and the situation

was scarcely improved by the incompetence and mismanagement of the viceroys appointed from the capital. Finally the chaos into which the province was drifting obliged Baghdad to send a well-known Turkish general, Muhammad Tughj, with full power to re-organise the defence and administration of the country, and with the Turkish title of *Ikshid* or Prince. For some time the Ikshid maintained his position, though a further crisis at Baghdad nearly threw him on one occasion into the arms of the Fatimids, who were throughout this period in continual negotiation with various parties in Egypt. Syria also came temporarily under the Ikshid dynasty, although it was always disputed territory with the Hamdanid princes of Aleppo, who were now at the height of their power. Finally the Ikshid position, never very strong, crumbled altogether, and the end came with the entrance of Jauhar, the brilliant general of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Muiz, into Fustat. Egypt from henceforth, until its re-conquest by the Ottoman Turks, held the status of an independent and sovereign state.

The period of the Fatimid domination, and those of the Ayyubids and Mamluks which followed, forms one of the most brilliant in all Egyptian history.¹ The Fatimids on conquering the country immediately removed their capital from North Africa to the new military settlement which Jauhar had laid out north of Fustat, called at first Mansuriyah and later Al-Kahira, or Cairo. Egypt thus automatically became the heart of a considerable empire, and the traditional rivalry of the powers of the northern and southern Mediterranean was revived in the struggles between the Fatimids and the Byzantine Romans of Constantinople. Egypt formed the heart of the resistance to both the Crusaders and the Mongols, and thus, in the complete decay of Irak and Syria, became the chief cultural centre of the whole Islamic world. Cairo as a city soon came to overshadow the older Fustat, and grew to become, what it still remains, the largest city in Africa. The celebrated mosque university of Al-Azhar came into being. By negotiation the Fatimids, despite their unorthodox

¹ For the Fatimid period in detail, see De Lacy O'Leary, "Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate"; London, 1923.

proclivities, obtained the recognition of the Sharifs of Mecca for their Caliphal claims, and thus Egypt gained control over the holy cities, the spiritual centre of the Muslim world. In Syria the Fatimid influence was less certain ; they had to deal with a serious rival in that country, as in Arabia, in the form of their spiritual cousins the Carmathians, who were not prepared to make the similarity of their beliefs a reason for ceding political power. In North Africa, their dominion stretched as far as the modern Tangier.

The most famous Fatimid reign—a reign, too, which marked the climax of their power—was that of the Caliph Hakim who, though perhaps not typical of the family, was certainly one of the most conspicuous and gifted of the line. Sometimes known as the Caligula of Egypt, he possessed a very much more original personality than the Roman Emperor, and left a deeper mark on contemporary history. The black side of his nature drew its chief strength from his intense religious bigotry, which prompted the persecution of all who did not agree with him in the most cruel and arbitrary fashion. As his religious opinions did not always form a constant quantity his persecutions covered a fairly comprehensive area of belief. Among other outrages, he was responsible for the destruction of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, an action which was one of the excuses for the Crusades. His tyrannous regulations led to violent opposition on the part of his subjects, and the climax came when he laid a claim to divinity and went into practical retirement. One night early in the year 1021 this extraordinary character disappeared entirely, and his sudden death—for such it must have been—was left unexplained. His divinity was thereafter preached by a Persian follower named Darazi, whose disciples, called after him Druzes, were eventually driven into Syria and settled in the more inaccessible parts of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains.

This strangely mixed reign—for Hakim, madman as he undoubtedly was, was an able administrative monarch and did much for Egypt, particularly in the sphere of architecture—shook the foundations of Fatimid power. His immediate successors came to the throne in each case as

boys, and showed themselves incapable of stopping the rot. A powerful attack by the Hamdanids of Aleppo produced a crisis, during which the Fatimid Caliphate would have fallen altogether had it not been for the energy of an Armenian supporter, who was forced, however, practically to re-conquer Egypt. The rise of the Seljuk power in Baghdad and the arrival of the European Crusaders in Palestine definitely put an end to Fatimid power in Syria. Even in Egypt the accession of each Caliph was now followed by continual intrigue and petty civil war. Finally the country was invaded by the Arab Prince of Mosul, Nur ud-Din, who at that time held Damascus. Nur ud-Din did not abolish the Caliphate, but appointed a vizier to administer the country under his own direction, thus depriving the Caliph of everything but a nominal position. When the first vizier, a Kurd named Shirguh, died, his nephew was appointed to succeed him. This nephew was the famous Saladin. Both Saladin and his master, Nur ud-Din, were strict Sunnis, or orthodox Muslims, as were the majority of Egyptians, in spite of the strong Shiah influence which the Fatimid rule had introduced and maintained. Nur ud-Din now gave Saladin instructions to undermine the Shiah position without if possible causing any public disturbance. Owing to the secret predilections of the Egyptian populace, this was easily accomplished, and the premature death of the last Fatimid Caliph was the signal for the restoration of the name of the orthodox Caliph of Baghdad in the *khutbah* at the Friday service—the mark of the supreme religious power in Islam. Nur ud-Din confirmed the appointment of his brilliant lieutenant as Governor of Egypt, but later, on the death of the former, Saladin took the title of Sultan. Egypt now entered upon a new period—that of the Ayyubid dynasty, so called from the name of Saladin's father Ayyub (Job). Saladin's wars against the Crusaders, and perhaps his personal inclination, kept him largely in Syria, and Damascus rather than Cairo was the administrative centre of his dominions. At his death they were divided, and the tedious story of internecine strife, so common in Near Eastern politics, began. At several periods during the contemporary Crusades (the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh),

Egypt was subject to Frankish pressure, which was, however, finally dispelled by the rout of the French king, Louis IX ("Saint Louis") near Damietta.

One of the last and the best of the Ayyubids, Najm ud-Din, was responsible for building up the power which was to bring about his family's downfall. As in so many other similar cases, this came about through the creation of a privileged prætorian guard. Circumstances probably compelled him to purchase large numbers of white slaves for his army, known in Arabic by the name of Mamluks, and the opposition of certain other military elements caused him to build special barracks for them on an island in the Nile. From this incident they obtained the nick-name of the *Bahri* or River Mamluks. In course of time the power of the Bahris grew at the expense of other elements in the State, including the Sultan himself. A crisis was forced by the sudden and unexpected appearance of a new and deadly enemy, the Mongol Hulagu Khan, who, having destroyed Baghdad and the Abbassid Caliphate, was descending upon Syria; it was no time for a *roi faineant*. But the Ayyubid dynasty was now represented by a lady Sultan, who did not feel strong enough to hold the reins in such dangerous days. She overcame the difficulty by marrying her chief Minister, who was himself a Bahri Mamluk, and thus the way was finally opened to Bahri ambition. Eventually, power fell into the hands of the celebrated Baibars (1260-77), whose reign as Sultan was a momentous one. The fact that there were now no longer Abbassid Caliphs in Baghdad gave him an opportunity of adding further lustre to Egypt by installing a member of the Abbassid family as Caliph in Cairo. Thus was inaugurated the dynasty of "shadow Caliphs" which continued until the occupation of Egypt by the Ottoman Turks. Baibars kept both Crusaders and Mongols in check, re-conquered large portions of Syria and Irak for Egypt, and enlarged her southern boundaries by the conquest of Nubia. He also compelled the princes of North Africa to recognise the overlordship of Egypt. One of his successors, Kala'un had to face an attempt on the part of the Syrians to gain their independence, and also renewed attacks on the part of the Mongols. The latter were once

more decisively defeated. The conversion to Islam of the Mongol rulers of Irak (the so-called Hulagid Ilkhans, or descendants of Hulagu) automatically made the Mongol problem a less serious one, and Kala'un's son Khalil was able to turn his attention to the Franks. He experienced little difficulty in clearing Syria of the Crusaders, Acre alone offering any serious resistance ; but his reign ended in internal disorder and his own assassination. Times of extreme uncertainty and difficulty followed. So various were the winds of contemporary Egyptian politics that one sultan, Nasir, was actually deposed twice during his career, and came to the throne three times ! Nasir was in many ways a remarkable sovereign. He not only gradually improved the political stability of the realm, but he instituted a survey of Egypt, and constructed a new major canal in the Alexandria neighbourhood, which brought a considerable acreage of new land under the plough. He instituted notable improvements in the cities, particularly Cairo and Damascus ; and kept also a brilliant Court, at which Abu'l-feda the historian was an outstanding literary figure. On his death, however, chaos returned to the country, the chief official positions becoming the sport of various powerful *amirs* or princes, each one of which placed a "shadow Sultan" on the throne to represent his interests. Revolts in the provinces became chronic, and in 1348 Egypt was visited by the Black Death, which is said to have carried off 900,000 victims in the neighbourhood of Cairo alone. The political situation was finally stabilised by a Circassian Mamluk named Barkuk, who eventually succeeded, after a lengthy civil war, in obtaining the person of the reigning sultan, who was an infant, and finally (in 1394), in deposing him in his own favour. Thus ended the dynasty of the Bahri Mamluks.

Barkuk's short reign was responsible for two notable incidents ; the opening of diplomatic relations with the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I (the first occasion in which the Ottomans entered the Egyptian scene), and a quarrel with the famous Mongol leader Timur (Tamerlane). The Egypt of this date, however, was not a match for the great conqueror of Asia ; Timur lost little time in over-running

Syria, and was only prevented from invading Egypt itself by the acceptance of his demand that homage should be paid to him. Although Syria returned to nominal allegiance on Timur's death, actually the real power was held by the local *amirs*, and much the same could be said of Egypt itself, which was now declining at a rapid rate. A survey undertaken at this time speaks of only two thousand towns and villages, as against ten thousand in earlier centuries. And across the Mediterranean a new Muslim power was arising—that of the Ottoman Turks, who in 1453 crowned their military success by the capture of the old Roman capital of Constantinople. The news of the victory was received in Egypt with great rejoicing, which, in view of what was to come, seems somewhat premature.

In the meanwhile, the actual government of Egypt continued to be carried on by the corps of Mamluks, who elected and deposed sultans as they pleased. The monarchs though legally autocrats, had no security of tenure, and little opportunity of founding a family dynasty. Some of the sultans showed vigour, however, and Egypt, though much weakened and frequently suffering from civil disorder, was by no means moribund. Successful external wars were maintained, and the Egyptian fleet was feared at least as far as Cyprus and Rhodes. The fact that the government was in the hands of foreigners—for the Mamluks were, now as always, in origin Circassian slaves—was, however, a fatal bar to its permanency. The common people had little love for the Mamluks, and there was thus no certainty that, in the event of attack by a strong outside power, they would rally to the Government's assistance. Only one power could now be considered a danger: the Mongols had disappeared; the Crusaders had long since become a memory; but the Ottoman Turks were rapidly rising to the crest of their military career.

It was inevitable that a country so strong and so covetous as the new Turkey should ultimately glance at the continued misgovernment of so rich and important a country as Egypt with more than disinterested eyes. Beginning with a disagreement over the succession to a small principality over which both countries held a shadowy claim, bad

feeling between the two governments was intensified by the mistaken policy of the Mamluks, who gave shelter to a pretender to the Turkish throne. War resulted, but the first Ottoman attacks were beaten off. A new pretext for war was discovered by the famous Ottoman Sultan Selim "The Grim," who invaded Syria personally and at the battle of Merj Dabik (August, 1515) utterly defeated the Mamluk forces. Syria almost immediately made her peace with the invading forces, but Egypt itself proved a more stubborn obstacle, and it was not until the January of 1517 that Selim entered Cairo. The decision, though gained with some difficulty, was final; Egypt's last period of independence was over. Selim had himself proclaimed Sultan of Egypt, and later, having taken the last Abbassid "shadow Caliph" back with him to Constantinople, Caliph of all Islam. The Abbassid and the Mamluk dynasties were abolished at one stroke.

For the next two centuries and a half the history of Egypt presents that absolutely stationary appearance which distinguished all the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Actually efforts were made by the earlier sultans, notably Selim himself, to establish an administration which should be loyal to Constantinople and at the same time popular enough locally to promise some stability. Beyond the fact that a Turkish pasha, supported by a regiment of Janissaries, was left to guard Imperial interests, little interference took place with the old Mamluk regime. The Copt civil service was taken over *en bloc*, as it had been by each conqueror in turn. The twelve provincial divisions of the country were still left under the headship of Mamluk princes, but an interesting innovation was introduced in the form of two Chambers to support the Pasha, in which the army, the *ulema* or religious authorities and the local notables were directly represented; they possessed, however, no legislative powers. Local Turkish rule soon degenerated, in spite of its early good intentions, into the usual welter of intrigue, corruption and assassination. Gradually all real power in the country drifted once again into the hands of the Mamluks, acting chiefly through two executive offices, the *Shaikh al-Balad* or Minister of the

Interior and the *Amir al-Haj*, the Leader of the *haj* or pilgrimage caravan to Mecca. The process by which these two offices attained to power is not clear, but by 1700 the position of the Turkish pasha had become merely honorary, and it was these two officials (always chosen by the Mamluk Beys from among their own number, and dividing their functions, like the old Roman consuls) who were the real rulers of Egypt. It was inevitable that some ambitious holder of the offices should eventually dream of joining legality to fact, and putting an end to the fiction which still bound Egypt to the Ottoman Empire.

Such a man did in fact arise in the middle of the eighteenth century. One *shaikh al-balad*, known as Ali Bey, spent several years in carefully consolidating his position and at last, in 1769, took the opportunity of an Ottoman demand for troops in the Russian war to declare the independence of Egypt. Ali Bey had first secured the public assent of the other Beys, and for a time, with Russian assistance, he successfully defied the Turks, and even invaded and conquered parts of Syria. But a rival arose to challenge his authority within the country itself, and Ali Bey eventually went down before him in battle. The rival, now supreme, entered into negotiation with Constantinople, and this last attempt to secure Egyptian independence came to an end. The Ottoman sway was destined to endure, at least in name, for another century and a half.

But actually a new age was already dawning, in which Egypt, in common with other parts of the Arab world, was to be shaken to her foundations by men and movements yet unthought of. For from the time of Ali Bey is now but a step to Napoleon, and thence but another to the stalwart days of Muhammad Ali and his son Ibrahim Pasha, during which Egypt definitely took shape as the "international problem" which she has since remained.

We see, then, the story of Egypt under Arab dominance as one of initial conquest and considerable (though by no means complete) penetration; of an early severance from the Empire; of succeeding rule by various dynasties, of Turkish or Circassian or Kurdish extraction, all Muslim,

but (with the possible exception of the Fatimid Caliphs) neither Arab nor native ; of a gradual and almost continuous economic and cultural decline ; and yet of a strange continuance of Arab influence in religion, in habits and in language, so that for the whole of the latter period from the fall of Baghdad to the present-day Egypt, not herself an Arab country, has paradoxically remained the one country in which something of Arab thought and cultural life has been kept alive, the great custodian of Arab civilisation. .

CHAPTER VI

THE WEST AND SPAIN

JUST as the Arab conquest of Egypt was less effective in the way of complete arabisation than the earlier occupations of Irak and Syria, so was the invasion of what were termed by the Arabs *Ifrikiyah* (Africa) and the *Muhgrib* (West) less decisive in final results than the occupation of Egypt. All the countries concerned (with the exception of Spain) remain Arab in speech and still form parts of the Arab world ; but the Arab influence grows progressively less the farther it moves westward, so that what is still strong in Egypt has in Morocco sunk to a rather feeble pitch. Nevertheless, the Arab influence in the west still goes on and, what is more remarkable, continues to grow ; French experts are agreed that there has been a noticeable tendency for certain Berber groups to abandon their own language in favour of Arabic even in the period of the French North-African occupation. Nowadays the Arab influence is less political than religious ; the superstitious native has a tremendous reverence for the local *marabouts* or holy men, and as these are always, or at any rate always claim to be, of Arab descent, there is a strong Arab cultural pressure always at work on the local population.

The original Arab invasion of Ifrikiyah was planned in Egypt, and took place as soon as conditions in that country permitted the conquerors to consider further adventures. At first they merely raided spasmodically and retired, leaving most of the strong points and towns in the hands of the Byzantine Romans. But soon here, as elsewhere, their policy grew bolder and more definite, until they had covered the whole coast as far west as Tunis. Here they founded a new city, Kairawan, to act as the capital of the new province.

Their hold on the country remained precarious, however, for many years, owing to the strenuous opposition not only of the Romans but even more of the native Berbers, who had little wish to see their old masters, much as they disliked them, exchanged for new. For some years Ifrikiyah was governed from Egypt; in 705 the Caliph Abdul Malik gave it the status of an independent governorate, the afterwards famous Musa bin Nusair being the first governor. The career of this great military leader covers the establishment of Arab power not only in Ifrikiyah but in the entire West. By 702 his lieutenant Tarik had actually reached Morocco, though the hold of the newcomers over the warlike Berbers was as precarious here as farther east. Tarik eventually overcame Berber opposition for the moment by inviting them to join him in an even more desperate adventure : the conquest of Spain. The latter country was at the moment ruled by a dynasty of Visigothic kings, who had also previous to the coming of the Arabs held Morocco. The Berbers finally agreed to Tarik's plan, and his small force of Arabs, Egyptians and Syrians was thus practically trebled. In the meanwhile he had got into negotiation with an officer of the Byzantine service, one Julian, the Governor of Ceuta, the only North African possession now left to the Romans. Julian had his own private reasons for preferring a new regime, and he provided not only a convenient base, but the actual transport to carry Tarik's small force across the Straits. Tarik landed in Spain near a celebrated rock, later re-named after him *Jebel Tarik*, "Tarik's Mountain"; or, in the English corruption, Gibraltar.

Tarik's daring raid—for it was little more—met with instant opposition, and the extreme danger of the invading force was soon made clear; and Musa, much annoyed at not having been apprised earlier of his lieutenant's intentions, was nevertheless forced to come to his assistance. The Visigothic kingdom, rent with internal faction, could offer little opposition to an organised attack, and by the year 712 the whole of the south of Spain was already in Arab hands. Although both Musa and Tarik were soon after recalled to Damascus, the joint Arab-Berber expedition met with but

feeble opposition ; by 718 the Pyrenees had been reached, and soon afterwards they were overrunning southern France. But here their fate awaited them. Disunion, having its basis as usual in tribal quarrels, had entered the Arab ranks, and the Berbers were already beginning to resent the arrogance of the Arabs and their tendency to allocate an undue portion of the joint booty to themselves. The *morale* of the army fell to pieces. The famous defeat at the hands of the French Mayor of the Palace, Charles Martel, marked at once the high water mark of Arab progress in western Europe and the birth of modern France.¹

The administration and the civilisation which the Arabs founded in Spain offer an attractive field for study, but for us their interest is strictly limited by the fact that they were impermanent. Alone among the major countries conquered by the Arabs, Spain plays no part in the modern Arab world. Though there are still numerous traces of Arab blood, manners and even speech to be found in Spain, actually the Muslim dominion came to an end in 1212 with the fall of the Almohad dynasty and the rise of the kingdom of Castile. Since then the Arab or Muslim influence has been negligible. But a brief *résumé* of the part played by Spain in the Arab Empire may help to form a correct picture of the whole.

The Spanish occupation may be roughly divided into three periods, only one of which has any direct interest à propos of the Arabs themselves. The first dates from the invasion to the end of the Ummeyyad Caliphate of Cordova (711-1020) ; the second sees the decay of Muslim power into small and mutually antagonistic principalities, which were only temporarily united under the African Berber dynasties of the Almoravids and the Almohads (1020-1492) ; and the third, after the "reconquista" by which modern Spain came into being, was the period of Christian domination, during which the Muslims were still permitted to remain in Spain, but only as vassals of an alien government. This came to an end in 1610, when the last of the

¹ The classic European account of the Arab occupation of Spain is Dozy's "Histoire des Musulmans d'Espagne"; Leiden, 1861.

“ Mudejars ” (Spanish Muslims) and “ Moriscoes ” (Muslims who had become Christians, but retained Arab habits) were expelled from the country. Thus from first to last the Muslim occupation lasted nine hundred years, for only about a third of which, however, the standard was upheld by men of Arab race.

In spite of the ease with which Spain was first conquered by the Arabs, their position there for some years was most precarious ; native opposition gradually rallied, and the Arab administration had to face continual changes of governors on the part of Damascus, and the usual lack of unity among the Arabs themselves. On the other hand, large numbers of local people regarded the newcomers as a distinct improvement. The old Visigothic kings had long since lost the respect of their subjects, and the great nobles and landowners were perfectly agreeable to hold their fiefs as from the hand of a newcomer, especially if—as was frequently the case—it meant an increase of power and privilege. Even high dignitaries of the Church were not found wanting to counsel prudence and the giving of a show of obedience to the “ infidel,” if he showed himself fair and just, rather than to risk everything on a final and probably hopeless throw. To the common people, the simple poll-tax laid down by the laws of Islam seemed a counsel of perfection after the constant burdens previously placed on their shoulders by king, baron and church alike ; and the serfs, realising that by adopting the new religion they could renounce their Christian masters and become free men, not unnaturally chose to do so in large numbers. These converted serfs were the foundation of the afterwards numerous class of Mudejars and Moriscoes alluded to above. But the Arabs on their side, having conquered the country, showed little disposition to organise or utilise it. The old quarrel between Yemeni and Modari, men of the south and men of the north, began to appear on Spanish soil as it had on Syrian, and the plains and valleys of the west re-echoed to battle-cries whose real home was the scorching desert of Najd. This policy, or lack of it, was more immediately disastrous in Spain than in the countries of the eastern Mediterranean, because in the latter case the Arabs had

taken over the machinery of long-established governments, machinery which, so long as they remained sufficiently disinterested not to wish to meddle with it, was capable of carrying on at least the framework of orderly, civilised life. Kalbite and Kaisite might intrigue against each other at the Court of Damascus, and fight furious battles on the desert outside ; but they were in a sense too much apart from the Government to shake it dangerously. In Spain, there was not much Government to shake. The Arabs came into, not an organised province whose daily life ran on wheels, but a half-barbarous country which had been governed, ever since the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, by a people with as little, or less, administrative capacity than they had themselves. Had the Caliphs shown any personal interest in their distant western colony, had they made a State visit to it and laid down in person a local organisation which would have had the backing of the Imperial prestige, the foundation of Arab society in Spain might have turned out to be as permanent as in Syria or Egypt. But the Caliphs had too many troubles nearer home to make the long voyage across the Mediterranean politically advisable. The Empire, in fact, had grown too big to be administered as a whole, under the cramped and slow travel facilities of the age. It became apparent with time that Spain, if she was to remain Arab at all, must be governed directly by an Arab family of unquestioned position, who would nevertheless choose to come and settle down permanently within her borders.

This was, in the event, exactly what did happen. The fall of the Ummeyyad Caliphs of Damascus and their substitution by the Abbassid dynasty of Baghdad proved to be a turning point in the history of Arab Spain. The new Caliphs, living under Persian and other eastern influences, paid even less heed than their predecessors to the western outposts of the Empire, and the continual disturbances in Spain and Morocco went unpunished. A grandson of the Ummeyyad Caliph Hisham had escaped the general slaughter which overtook his family by a timely flight to Africa. Here he wandered in disguise for several years, protected by the various Arab tribes settled in the interior, who

respected his great name and sympathised with his unhappy fate. Rumours of his wanderings drifted to Spain and struck the imagination of the Spanish Arabs, who began to see in this scion of the Ummeyad house a possible hope for their own future. Finally a deputation of Spanish nobles, tired of the perpetual disorder in the peninsula, and alarmed at the increasingly aggressive attitude of the Berbers (who deeply resented what they considered to be their inferior share of the Spanish conquests), visited Africa to seek him out and offer him the Spanish throne. Their hopes were not disappointed. The young man, Abdur Rahman by name, gladly accepted the offer and, in 758, landed in Spain. The ruling *amir* was put aside, and the Ummeyad newcomer installed in his place. Gifted with determination and real political ability, the young prince set to work to heal the internecine quarrels which were threatening to ruin Spain. Although he himself, as a Kuraishi, was of the North Arabian tribal group, he made use as far as possible of men of South Arabian ancestry, hoping thus to soften the ancient quarrel. The Berbers, and descendants of the Syrian and Egyptian soldiers who had come to Spain with Tarik, he contrived to isolate by splitting them into groups and by overawing them with a great new army of white slaves. The Jews and the old inhabitants of the Spanish cities he encouraged by every means in his power, hoping thus to knit the civilised and trading portion of the community to the throne. The Jews helped him actively in the creation of his new army, for they acted as go-betweens to the French town of Verdun, then the great European market for slaves. To his white slave army Abdur Rahman presently added a black one, recruited in North Africa. At his death he left, in the place of a number of more or less independent principalities, a united kingdom covering all southern and most of northern Spain, with its capital at Cordova; leaning largely on the military support of a prætorian army of mercenaries, half white, half black; composed of a variety of original elements, apparently not easily reconcilable; and offering, perhaps, but little hope of permanence.

But the Ummeyad prince had at least united Muslim

Spain and given it a definite position in the political world. In prestige he had made himself recognised as among the contemporary great monarchs of the day. The Abbassids of Baghdad paid him the compliment of refraining from claiming Spain for the Caliphate, and Charlemagne of France, after one disastrous attempt to subdue him, came to terms. He enriched Cordova with many fine buildings, including the famous mosque, which he did not, however, live to finish. Although discontinuing the prayer for the Caliphs in the *khutbah* at the Friday service, he never assumed the title himself. He was pressed to do so by his supporters, but declined on the plea that the monarch who held the holy cities of Mecca and Medina alone possessed the right to the Caliphal rank.

The essential insecurity of the realm was shown only too clearly during the next two reigns. Hisham (766-96) and Hakam (796-822), the son and grandson respectively of Abdur Rahman, were both able men, but of diverse character. Hisham was quiet, studious and grave, and much under the influence of the famous Medina doctor of law, Ibn Malik, the founder of one of the four orthodox schools of religious law in Islam. Through Hisham's efforts the Malikite system was introduced into Spain, and became the State religion. Hakam, on the other hand, was a gay and very human monarch, fond of amusement and display, and in frequent trouble with the religious element which his father had made so powerful. Both princes were military leaders of marked ability, which was exceedingly fortunate in view of the fact that they had to face continual attacks on the country on the part of the great Charlemagne and his successors, many of them instigated by disappointed Arab aristocrats who had repaired to the Court of Aix-la-Chapelle. At one time the Franks, aided by local rebels, captured Barcelona, Valencia and even Toledo ; the Muslims, on the other hand, raided successfully into southern France, captured Narbonne and put to flight the Frankish forces under the Count of Toulouse.¹ A serious riot in Cordova itself led to the expulsion of a large body of Spanish Mus-

¹ This campaign is famous in European literature as having given birth to the *Chanson de Roland* and associated legends.

lims, who eventually reached Crete and laid the foundation of the temporary Muslim supremacy on the island, which lasted until its conquest by Venice.

The reigns of the next four Amirs hold little but the continual struggle of the Crown to maintain its authority against the attacks of enemies within and without. Some of the Arab noble families had become at this time so rich and powerful as to surpass the Amir himself in the number of their retainers and the luxury of their courts ; and desultory attacks by the Franks continued in the northern marches, sometimes supported by the Spanish Christians, and supplemented by a new enemy from the sea, the Normans. But the very fact that the monarchy was able to hold its own showed the gradual progress of order over confusion. The perseverance of the Amirs met its reward in the reign of Abdur Rahman III (912-961), the greatest of all the Spanish Arab rulers. Abdur Rahman had to meet not only the opposition of the usual enemies, but the jealousy of the Fatimid Caliphs of Africa and Egypt, now in the first flush of their power. His campaigns against the Fatimids in Africa itself were indecisive, but he effectively nipped in the bud any ideas they may have had of invading Spain. In internal affairs he was notably successful. The power of the Arab nobles was finally crippled, and from now onwards they cease to play any part in Spanish history. Gradually Abdur Rahman built up for himself a position which was recognised all over Europe. Embassies visited him from every court ; his capital developed into a city of a million people, rivalled only in contemporary Islam by Fustat and Baghdad. The crowning glory came in January, 929, when the Amir finally decided to assume the titles of Caliph and *Amir al-Mua'minin*, or "Commander of the Faithful." The Abbassid Caliphs of Baghdad were still in existence, but their power was negligible ; Mecca and Medina were in the hands of the unorthodox Fatimid Caliphs of Cairo. Apart from political expediency, Abdur Rahman no doubt felt himself justified on this score in assuming a title from which his ancestors had shrunk. His prestige had now reached its height ; with the exception of the contemporary "Holy Roman" Emperor, Otto the

Great, the Caliph of Cordova was generally recognised as the first monarch of Europe.

But the Spanish Caliphate was destined to be but short-lived. With the exception of Abdur Rahman's brilliant son Hakam II, the founder of the great library of Cordova, there are now no great reigns left to record. The throne on the death of Hakam (October, 976) passed to a young son, Hisham, and the boy Caliph was never more than a puppet in the hands of the ruling Chamberlain. The fate which always seems to attend upon autocratic monarchies was now falling on the Caliphs of Spain. Abdur Rahman, with a natural desire to stand well with the Arab aristocracy, while not allowing them to become too powerful, had organised a civil service of his own, purely of an official type, in which the executive power rested in the hands of servants of his own, drawn frequently from the ranks of the slave mercenaries. The latter now began to play the same part in Spain that the Mamluks did in Egypt. Like the latter, they were principally white slaves (always known in Spain as *Iskalabi* or Slavs), brought from Russia and other wild northern countries by the Venetian and Pisan traders, and purchased for the Spanish Government in the great slave market of Verdun. Their use in civil occupations soon tended to the supplanting of free men, just as in the case of the Mamluks and for the same reason : that being slaves they could be more safely depended on, since their own fate was bound up with that of their masters. But they were hated by Arab, Berber and native Spaniard, and their employment in high office led to the estrangement of the people from the throne, just at the time when their loyalty was most needed. Another new social factor soon came to aid the disintegration of the State. Many of the cities, particularly Cordova, had developed an independent class of shopkeepers and superior artisans, who now began to claim a share in national political life. A wise administration might perhaps have overcome its present dangers by a skilful play upon the mutual dislike of Arab aristocrat, Berber immigrant, Slav ex-slave, native Muslim, Jew and Christian, soldier, farmer and trader ; might even have gradually welded the divergent elements into a permanent political entity. But the wise administra-

tion did not exist. One at least of the Chamberlain-governors was a great man, but only in the sense that he was able to keep the outside enemies of the State at bay, and even to extend its boundaries. Internally, even he could effect very little. There was no common sentiment to act as mortar to the building, and, the capable hand once removed, the Empire automatically fell away into its several parts. By the year 1035 the Caliphate had disappeared, and Cordova, once its capital city, was a small republic.

The rest of the story can be dismissed in a few words. Muslim Spain never recovered its old prosperity, though it revived temporarily under the two Berber dynasties which crossed over from Africa at the request of the Spaniards. Both of them had religious origins. The impulse which brought the first into being came from the conversion to Islam of the Berber tribes of the inner Sahara, called by the Arabs *Musalimin* or "The Veiled," because the men always wore veils to protect them from the glare of the desert. These tribesmen came much under the influence of their spiritual leaders, whom they termed *marabouts*¹ or holy men, and, as often in the middle ages, spiritual ascendancy was easily changed to civil control. The marabouts eventually established a ruling family, called after them *Al-Marabita*, europeanised into Almoravides, who soon gained a position along the North African littoral which enabled them to interfere in Spanish affairs. Their control of the country was short-lived, however. They were followed by the Almohades (Arabic *Al-Muwahidin*, "Unitarians"), who came to power on the strength of a protest against the growing tendency to saint worship in Muslim Africa. The Muslim portions of Spain were once more united under their rule, but the union was transitory, and the growing national feeling of the country was now unmistakably centred in the little Christian states of the north. The gradual amalgamation of these into one

¹ Marabout is a French corruption of the Arabic *Murabit*, the participle of a verb meaning "to picket one's horse on a hostile frontier." The institution of *Ribats* or fortified frontier posts dates from the Abbassid Caliphs of Baghdad, who used them as a front line of defence on their long frontier against the Byzantine Romans. Service in them was voluntary, but was regarded as a meritorious religious duty, as the first post of danger against the "Infidel." Hence the secondary and later meaning of "holy man," "ascetic," etc.

powerful kingdom sounded the death knell of Muslim civilisation in Spain. One by one the provinces dropped away, until only Granada, ably governed by an Arab family descended from the Khasrak of Medina, remained. For two centuries this little court maintained a certain local grandeur, supported by the wealth of its agriculture, and adorned by the artistic nature of its subjects. The Alhambra, one of the great buildings of the world, is a relic of this period. But politically the position of the Muslims was now hopeless, and their fate was sealed just as soon as the rest of Spain chose to make up its mind on the point. The end came in 1489, when Muslim treachery handed over Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella. The promises made to the Muslim population by the Christian king and queen were ruthlessly broken, and the Muslims were gradually exterminated. The task was completed when the last of the Moriscoes¹ were driven out of the country by Philip III, in 1610. Thus the attractive and in many ways unique western civilisation which had come into being with the arrival of the Arabs was finally swept away by a half-civilised people as barbarous as they had once been themselves. Europe owed much to Spanish Islam. Cordova held aloft the lamp of education at a time when it flickered but dimly in other European cities. Scholars from widely separated countries, including England, visited Muslim Spain to learn from her. The intellectual life of the time was not merely academic; it could produce original thought, as the presence of an Averroes and a Maimonides shows. The exquisite conception of life which could produce a palace like the Alhambra, a place of public worship like the great mosque of Cordova, offered a strange contrast to the romantic barbarity of the Franks and Normans, with their rude manners, their rough joviality, their saint-worshipping religion and their firm belief in dirt and discomfort. Perhaps Spanish Islam was too exotic a plant to live; more probably it was blasted only by that inability to produce a settled political system which, perhaps owing to the almost fiercely democratic outlook of

¹ For the full story of the last of the Muslims and pseudo-Muslims, see H. C. Lea: "The Moriscos of Spain"; London, 1901.



The Alhambra

Muslim teaching, seems to be inherent in Islamic states. Islam has never yet solved the problem of how to combine the rights of the ordinary Muslim citizen—rights which no Muslim, however tyrannical, will willingly curtail, because they are based on the plain teaching of the Prophet himself—with the rights of the State, as representing the whole body politic. As a consequence, democratic as is its theory, Islam has never yet produced a democracy. Somewhere there seems to lurk in the Muslim mind a fatal lack of political balance. It follows that Muslim states have been well governed only when they have been autocratically governed by a man able and strong enough to defy public opinion when necessary, and insist on his word being law. And this defiance of public opinion has always been dangerous ; the autocrat, even where his rule is beneficial, has usually been forced in the long run to some expedient outside altogether of the will or the power of his people, in order to support his position ; he has seldom dared to rely upon the loyalty of his subjects as a principle of government. Hence the popularity of the slave troops, which have played such a large and such a baneful part in Muslim history. Hence Islamic states show in politics always the same vicious circle ; rapid expansion under vigorous leadership ; a short midday of full bloom, during which the memory of past triumphs is sufficient to ensure loyalty to the State ; and a long decline in which the Government is propped up by artificial expedients, and life stagnates under a topsyturvy administration in which free men have to bow before slaves. To this general rule Spanish Islam was no exception. It fell because, politically speaking, it deserved to fall. Yet with all its faults, it did succeed in creating a type of civilisation which was unique in Europe ; it did enable Spain to be almost the only European country to escape the "dark ages." It offered a picture of that theocratic socialism which is Islam in full bloom in particularly beautiful surroundings, and supported by a refined intellectual and artistic sense which distinguished it from the Muslim countries of the East. It is the picture of a pleasant dream, of sunshine, gardens, courtesy and refined living, a dream which came and was and went again, dis-

solving before the hard reality of modern Europe, leaving behind it only the legacy of chivalry and of an architecture which it had stamped for all time as peculiarly its own. In the rich background of the European past there will always lurk Andalusia—as Spanish Islam was called by its Arab masters—as a sad and rather fragrant memory.

CHAPTER VII

THE AFRICAN COAST

IF we have been guilty of a diversion from the main stream of Arab African history into the pleasant backwater of Spanish Islam, we may at least fairly plead that this is only in accordance with the precedent set by the Arab conquerors themselves. For after the conquest of Spain, the history of North Africa ceases to have anything but a local meaning. The genius of the race passed on, leaving only bare bones behind. North Africa consistently exhibits, broadly speaking, the worst evils of Arab rule without any of its compensating advantages. The administrative looseness, the political uncertainty, the lack of grip are there ; the beauty, the scholarship, the inspiration, the art are lacking. There is a harsh and wild note about Arab Africa throughout its history, which was absent alike in Spain, in Egypt or in Syria. Weird religious figures—mahdis, messiahs, marabouts—burst suddenly out of the Saharan hinterland, spreading death and desolation in their paths, overturning governments in the name of the Lord, substituting religious fanaticism for the mental balance of civilization. Strange dynasties, like the Fatimid Caliphs, struggle to power out of obscure, secret societies. Perhaps it is the perpetual presence of the Sahara, never very far away, always ready to make itself felt climatically even in the most favoured districts, which gives this sense of melodrama to the North African character. Ifrikiyah and the Mughrib are essentially the homes of religious freemasonry ; pass-words, plottings and secret societies are in the very air. That this is a genuine characteristic of the people is proved by its extraordinary persistency ; even to-day over three-quarters of the population of Algeria, Morocco and Tunis are believed to belong to one or other of the secret brotherhoods,

of which the famous Senussis are the most prominent. This attitude towards life is responsible for the evil, grim, brooding effect which characterizes both the physical aspect of the African littoral and the history of its inhabitants. The North African lands are essentially unpleasant countries. One sympathizes instinctively with the Fatimid Caliphs who, having conquered Egypt, immediately deserted their old homeland of Ifrikiyah for the new acquisition.

In certain respects, however, the Arab domination of North Africa was more successful than that of Spain. If it did not produce brilliant results, at least it was not impermanent. Though the Berbers were but seldom conquered in the field, and never decisively, they were conquered spiritually and culturally in the most amazing manner ; so much so that to all but the expert eye the Arab and Berber of North Africa seem at the present day to be identical. It was this assimilation, rather than military conquest, which secured North Africa for Islam as a permanent field. The Muslim hold on Ifrikiyah, the Mughrib and Marakeesh (Morocco) did not relax under either the expansion into, or the retirement from, Spain, but it was, after the first few centuries, essentially a native and not an Arab hold ; with the single exception of the second Arab invasion of the Beni Hilal, to be referred to later. Thus even in the early days of the Arab Empire, the Arab's hold on the Berber was moral rather than physical. Strong as has been the mark which he left on him, he never really succeeded in conquering him. At best he held the western country for the Empire with the Berber's consent and often with Berber soldiery. When dissolution came to the Empire, the local Arab princely families carried on a desperate struggle to maintain their position, but it was a losing battle against local influences which were too strong for the foreigner to resist.

The African dominions of the Empire did not break away quite as early as Spain. Until the reign of Harun ar-Rashid the whole of the northern littoral continued to acknowledge the Caliph of Baghdad. But one of the many Alid rebellions which the earlier Abbassid Caliphs had to meet in Arabia had resulted in the flight to Africa of Idris, a direct

descendant of Ali through Hassan. Idris, after many adventures, secured a following among the Berbers of the far west, and eventually founded an independent principality in Morocco. His son, Idris II, founded the new city of Fas (Fez), of which he still remains the patron saint. Morocco was thus lost permanently to the Empire.

Ifrikiyah itself and the more eastern portion of the Mughrib (the western portion being formed, of course, by Morocco), remained under the nominal control of the Empire for a rather longer period. As in Egypt, the break-away was brought about by a talented family of governors who managed to make the governorship hereditary, and, while professing absolute loyalty to the throne, actually ruled independently of Baghdad. The first of these governors, Ibrahim bin Aghlab, was appointed by Harun ar-Rashid in A.D. 801, and from the first the relationship between the family and the Caliphs seems to have been on a looser and less clearly defined footing than in the case of the usual province. The governors never claimed for themselves any title higher than that of *amir* (prince), and formally acknowledged the position of the Caliphs in all public utterances, on coins and medals and so on; on the other hand, they did not scruple to disobey the Caliphal instructions when it suited them, nor did they make any effort to help the throne when its position began to get difficult and shaky. As early as the reign of Mamun, they felt strong enough to reply insolently to a Caliphal request, nor was any effort made to punish them. The Aghlabid dynasty lasted a century; its only notable contribution to Arab history was the invasion of Sicily, which grew out of the raids which had been made on the island at intervals since the reign of the first Ummeyyad Caliph of Damascus, Muawiyah. The invasion was not immediately successful; it was not until 878 that Syracuse was taken, after which Sicily remained an Arab possession under its own *amir*, until its capture by Roger the Norman in 1085. The Aghlabid fleet also raided the southern coasts of Italy and even Rome itself, but without effecting any permanent settlements. From Sicily they also attacked and (with the help of the native population) captured Malta (870). As in Sicily, this dominion was

ended by Roger the Norman in 1090, after an uneventful history. Malta was held throughout only by a small Arab garrison, which did not interfere in the lives of the inhabitants; and the Arabs left behind them neither their religion nor their language. (There was in fact a small Muslim colony, which was exterminated by the Normans.)

The Arab occupation of Sicily was stormy throughout. So central an island was bound to be continually disputed in these times of almost continuous war, and in addition the invaders themselves suffered from constant dissension, caused by the fact that later Arab immigrants from Spain brought a second Muslim strain into the island. Muslim Sicily thus presents little of interest except in the realm of the arts, especially architecture. Much of the finest Muslim work in Palermo and other cities was done, strangely enough, after the Norman conquest, when Sicily became a cosmopolitan kingdom, in which Greek, Arab and Western influences lived side by side. The typical Arab figure of this period is the geographer Idrisi (*circa* 1130), who flourished at the court of Roger II of Sicily, and published there his famous geography compiled from the personal descriptions of travellers dispatched for the purpose by the king. The later Sicily, like Spain, was essentially a spot at which Arab civilization touched that of Europe in a somewhat similar manner (though the rôles are now reversed) as in modern Egypt. The pressure of Islamic civilization reacted on the ignorance of Europe, and stimulated it to the activity which paved the way for the Renaissance.¹

But in the meanwhile a movement was being nursed in the deserts of Ifrikiyah which was destined to bring to the ground the structure of Aghlabid power, now carefully preserved for over a century. Brief allusion has already been made to the Fatimids in connection with their Egyptian activities. The Fatimids, it will be remembered, were Shiahs and Alids, claiming descent from Fatima, the wife of Ali and daughter of the Prophet, and were in origin an offshoot of the Ismaili sect of Syria, the Ismailis themselves being actually Shiah dissenters. Ever since the Berbers had

¹ For the Arabs in Sicily, see Amari, "Musulmani in Sicilia."

become Muslims, they had furnished a fruitful field for the ministrations of sectaries. The old hostility to the Arabs, outwardly subdued by the brotherhood of the new religion, began to express itself in variations of the religion which happened to suit the smouldering Berber resentment at Arab supremacy. In other words, the Arabs being orthodox, the Berbers, who hated the Arabs, tended for that very reason to welcome unorthodoxy. So successful was the Ismaili propaganda in Ifrikiyah that, about 900, the head of the sect was induced to visit the country ; he was, however, discovered by Government agents and thrown into prison. This was the signal for a general rising of the Berbers of the inland districts under the leadership of Ismaili officers which swept away the Aghlabid rule, permanently alienated Africa from the Baghdad Caliphate, and ended in the establishment of the released Ismaili leader as the first Fatimid Caliph under the name of Mahdi. A new capital, called Mahdiah, was founded in what is now Tunisia, and a great Shiah power built up in the heart of Sunni, or orthodox Muslim territory.

The Fatimid power was compelled by its very nature to be constantly on the offensive. Internally it was surrounded by enemies, for the Berbers, once their immediate political object was obtained in the overthrow of the Arabs, cared little for the Fatimid doctrines and made such poor Shiahs that they immediately reverted to orthodoxy once the Fatimid hand was removed. Consequently, rebellion was almost endemic, and sometimes of so serious a nature that on at least one occasion the Caliph was besieged in his own capital. The comparative poverty of Ifrikiyah, which made it by nature unsuitable to be the heart of an imperial power, forced the Fatimids to be equally active abroad. Sicily was conquered from the Aghlabid governor and held temporarily, until it became independent under its own amir ; the coasts of Italy, France, Sardinia and Corsica were ravaged, with no important results, except a temporary occupation of Genoa. These constant naval raids were a state necessity, because the booty from them supplied the Fatimids with funds which the poverty of their country would hardly have allowed from taxation alone. The fruits

of the far-seeing and careful policy of the Fatimids were to be seen at last in the great reign of Muizz (953-975), who with his great general Jauhar conquered first the whole of the Mughrib to the shores of the Atlantic, and then turned upon Egypt. The submission of Mecca and Medina was secured by negotiation, and a precarious footing obtained in Syria ; and thus for a brief space the Caliph Muizz ruled over the whole Muslim world from Damascus to Morocco. The subsequent career of the Fatimids in Egypt has already been traced ; in the west they were less fortunate. Here they had to face the active rivalry of the Caliphate of Spain, then at the height of its powers. Their position in Morocco lasted scarcely two decades, after which the towns reverted to the Spanish rulers, and the country fell to small local Berber dynasties. In what is now Algeria their rule lasted longer, but after their removal of the capital to Cairo, the remoteness of this province compelled them to delegate their authority to local chieftains, one of which, Boluggin of the Sanhaja Berbers, was the founder of the city of Algiers. Similarly in Morocco the Spanish hold gave way to that of various local chieftains. Boluggin's son, Hammad, formally revoked his allegiance to the Fatimids, and had the prayer in the *khutbah* at the Friday service said in the name of the Caliph of Baghdad. He founded a dynasty of considerable importance, covering all the western part of Ifrikiyah and much of the Mughrib, and having diplomatic relations with the Pope and the Italian sea cities. In the east of Ifrikiyah, similarly, another native dynasty set up by the Fatimid Caliphs eventually turned upon them, claiming political independence and transferring their spiritual allegiance to the Abbassids of Baghdad ; these were the Zirites, who ruled actually from the old capital of the Fatimids, Mahdiah, itself. In revenge the Fatimids dispatched to Ifrikiyah a huge nomad Arab army of the Beni Hilal, a warlike and restless tribe which had been domiciled in Egypt for some two centuries, and had given persistent trouble. The Hilal were given *carte blanche* to keep and hold any lands which they captured, and in 1045 they burst into Ifrikiyah, ravaging the countryside, driving the agricultural population into the hills and looting the towns. The province

never recovered from this blow, and, except for the coast settlements, reverted to nomad barbarism, from which condition it was only rescued by the French in the nineteenth century. The Beni Hilal invasion, though terribly destructive, had extremely important results. It enormously increased the Arab population of North Africa—a large majority of the African Arab tribes claim descent from the Hilal—and gave an impetus to the spread of Arabic and Arab culture at a time when their influence was definitely on the wane. The Zirite dynasty did not absolutely disappear before this invasion; it lingered on the coast until 1148, when Mahdiah was captured by Roger II of Sicily, and Ifrikiyah was ruled for a brief space by the Normans.

Meanwhile in the far west a powerful new local dynasty had been arising. From the followers of a *ribat* or religious outpost on the Niger river, called for this reason *murabitin* or marabouts there sprang in the early eleventh century a powerful confederation of monkish fighting men under the leadership of one Yusuf bin Tashfin, the first *Amir al-Muslimin* or "Prince of the Muslims," the title assumed by the so-called Almoravid (*al-murabitin*) dynasty. By the year 1080 Yusuf had overrun all Morocco, working from his newly-found capital of Marrakeesh; three years later he had penetrated as far east as Algiers. His crowning glory, however, was his conquest of Spain, where he defeated the armies of the Christian king, Alfonso VI of Leon and Castile, and reunited the various Muslim principalities under one rule. But the dynasty which he founded was destined to be but short-lived. From 1100 onwards a new and much more powerful state was being founded among the Berbers of the Masmuda tribe by the greatest Berber in history: the religious teacher, saint and revolutionary, Ibn Tumart. As a boy and young man, this remarkable thinker had studied in the East, where his mind had caught something of the idealism and religious enthusiasm of the great Baghdad theologian, Ghazali. The latter had breathed fresh life into the formalism which had for centuries been creeping like a paralysis over the orthodox Islam of the East; Ibn Tumart returned home hot with the desire to

do the same for the West. Here, in the Mughrib and Spain, religious teaching had long been purely formal, and even the forms of religion were beginning to be neglected ; Ibn Tumart began to preach both a strict adherence to the laws of the faith, and a logical and scientific spiritual interpretation of them which should reconcile them to the hearts of thinking men. His persistence, his eloquence and his boldness in rebuking breaches of the law in high places quickly brought him a reputation ; but, like most reformers, he had to meet the hostility of the powers that be, and he was driven out of all the big cities in turn. Back with his own Berber tribe, however, he made solid, if gradual progress, though he had to make the intellectual concession of posing as a marabout and pretending to perform miracles in order to make sure of his ascendancy over these simple folk. By the year 1121, however, his influence was so well established that he took the title of *Mahdi*, the Deliverer from error ; and from the date of this assumption his political rôle begins. His doctrine that the ruling family of the Almoravids were indifferent to true religion and therefore not fitted to command the Faithful soon became, as it was intended to be, provocative of unrest ; and then began a struggle between the new Mahdi and the authorities which continued until the death of the former. Ibn Tumart had previously made a confidant of two men, his second-in-command, Abdul Mua'min, and the shaikh of the Hintata Berbers, named Abu Hafs. The former succeeded him, taking the titles of Caliph and *Amir al-mua'minin*, or Commander of the Faithful ; and almost immediately instituted an aggressive military policy which first gained him southern Morocco and then (1147) Marrakeesh. Fez and Tangier followed, and then Abdul Mua'min took his first step overseas by furnishing aid to a rebel group engaged in promoting a rising against the Almoravids. By 1150 the empire of the latter had entirely disappeared, with the exception of the Balearic Isles, to which the remnant of the family now retired. Having consolidated his position in Spain, the Almohad Caliph now turned his attention eastward ; the Hammadite dynasty reigning in western Ifrikiyah was overturned, and the Normans driven

out of the district round Mahdiah (the modern Tunisia). When Abdul Mua'min died (1163), he left behind him a dominion stretching from Egypt to the Atlantic and including Spain, the largest empire ever governed by any western Muslim power, not excluding the Caliphs of Cordova. It was destined to enjoy, however, but a century and a half of life. In Spain, indeed, it began to crack a good deal earlier. The energy of the Christian principalities of the north was now increasing rapidly, and in 1212 the Almohad troops were decisively defeated in the field by Alfonso of Castile and his allies. This battle marked the beginning of a rapid decline, which soon spread to Africa. The descendants of Abu Hafs, one of the two confidants of Ibn Tumart, had enjoyed almost throughout the Almohad period a practical independence in Tunisia; in 1228 they fell out with the Caliphal house and openly threw off the yoke. Thus was established the Hafsids house, ruling from their new capital of Tunis, who restored to that part of Ifrikiyah the position it had enjoyed in the early Fatimid days. As the Almohad power declined, more and more provinces began to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Amir of Tunis, who, on the fall of the Abbassid Caliphate of Baghdad, was recognized for a time by the sharifs of Mecca as the rightful heir to the spiritual headship of Islam. Two other new dynasties shared with them the Almohad empire in Africa; the Marinids in Morocco and the Abdul Wad in what is now Algeria (western Ifrikiyah and eastern Mughrib), their capital being Tlemcen. By 1258 the Marinids had conquered practically the whole of Morocco, and with the capture of Marrakeesh (1269), and the death of the last Almohad Caliph, the last great western Muslim empire comes to an end.

The Marinid period marks a definite decline in the fortunes of Morocco, which has continued, with short intermissions to the present day. Though they produced some capable amirs, and showed for a time much military activity, invading Spain, making the Abdul Wad of Tlemcen their vassals, and attacking, though unsuccessfully, the Hafsids of Tunis, their successes were short-lived. By 1359 Tlemcen was free of them again, their hold on Spain

had gone, and within a few more generations they had even lost several coast-towns in Morocco itself to Portugal. In 1471 they disappeared altogether, and were succeeded by the Wattasi dynasty, which lasted only until 1548. The only notable events of their period were the building of Tetuan to accommodate the Muslim refugees from Spain, expelled from that country by the Christian conquerors ; and the loss of more coast-towns to Portugal and, latterly, to Spain. (One of these, Melilla, has been held by Spain ever since.) These reverses finally roused the latent spirit of the country, and a new national movement began which proclaimed a *jihad* or holy war against the Portuguese, and raised to the throne a family of *sharifs* or descendants of the Prophet through Hassan, in origin Hijazis but long resident in Morocco. This so-called Sa'adi dynasty had a short and stormy history of a hundred and twenty years, the only notable ruler of the line being Ahmad IV nicknamed *Ad-Dhahibi*, or "The Golden," who effectively prevented further Spanish and Portuguese penetration and greatly extended the boundaries of Morocco in the south, embracing the oases of Tuat and Timbuktu. He enjoyed considerable prestige in Europe, and was in friendly diplomatic relations with Queen Elizabeth against the common Spanish enemy. The Turkish occupation of Egypt, which took place during his reign, having put an end to the Abbassid "shadow" Caliphate in that country, Ahmad decided to assume the title himself. The western Caliphate was thus revived, though destined never to assume the importance of its predecessors.

On Ahmad's death in 1603, however, the Sa'adi power fell rapidly to pieces. His son, Zidan, had difficulty in maintaining his position, more than once being compelled to employ the assistance of English troops lent to him by Charles I for the purpose of subduing his rebellious subjects. The European connection grew so strong as to aggravate local opinion, with the result that Zidan's son, Muhammad XIII, was driven from his throne by a national movement headed by another family of *sharifs*. The capture of Fez marked the final triumph of this family, and the dynasty which they founded, known as the Filali, still

rules Morocco to-day. The subsequent history of the country belongs to modern times.

Further east in Tlemcen the Abdul Wad dynasty continued to rule for two hundred years under the title of sultans of Tagrart. For several decades Tlemcen itself enjoyed a period of great prosperity, due largely to its extensive trade with Europe. It had a considerable Jewish and Christian population, and supported a brilliant court. The first decisive blow to be struck at the position of the sultanate was the Spanish occupation of Oran in 1509, which ruined the European trade of Tlemcen. Within the next decade came the Ottoman Turks under Barbarossa, who, though unable to capture Tlemcen itself, seized most of the outside territory of the sultanate. Shortly afterwards the sultan accepted the protection of Spain. The end came in 1553 when the city finally capitulated to the Turks, and the independent sultanate came automatically to an end.

More brilliant was the career of the Hafsids of Tunis. Acknowledged as Caliph by the sharifs of Mecca themselves, holding territory reaching from Tripoli in the east to the sultanate of Tlemcen in the west, and even acknowledged for a time as suzerain by the Marinids of Morocco, the ruler of Tunis held now a position in Islam second to none. Several European invasions were beaten off, two of them—that of St. Louis of France (1270) and of the Duke of Bourbon (1390), in which English troops took part—of considerable size and importance. But already the tide of prosperity was turning. Family divisions among the Hafsids themselves led to civil war, and for a time the principality was divided into two, a second Hafsid ruling independently as sultan of Bougie. The unity of the kingdom was finally restored, but not before Tripoli on the east had slipped from its grasp, under a local family of *amirs*, the Beni Ammar (1321). The position of the ruler was now more precarious, and for a time the country fell into the power of the Marinids of Morocco, who failed, however, to retain their footing. A revival of Hafsid power followed, marked by the notable reign of Abu Faris Aziz (1393-1434), who restored the prestige of Tunis to such an extent that he was able to interfere successfully in the affairs of Tlemcen

and other adjoining countries. Tripoli was reconquered during his reign. The increase of piracy in the Mediterranean, however, was tending to interrupt the trade with Europe which was Tunis's main economic mainstay, and Abu Faris Aziz's successors were not able to emulate his success. Gradually the position of the principality worsened again. In 1510 Tripoli, which had temporarily reasserted its independence, was captured by the Spaniards, who later handed it to the Knights of St. John. Other cities, such as Constantine and Bougie, rebelled successfully from the rule of Tunis and set up as independent republics. The bedouin Arab tribes in the hinterland controlled the caravan trade routes into the interior of Africa, and levied heavy blackmail on the trade of Tunis. Bougie was seized by the Spaniards; hard on their heels came the Ottoman Turks, who by their capture of Algiers (1516) were able to assert their authority over most of what is now Algeria. The Mediterranean struggle between Spain and Turkey was now at its height and the principality of Tunis sank to the position of a pawn in the game. Renewed dissension in the Hafsid family enabled both Spain and Turkey to get a foothold in the country, one power supporting one claimant to the throne, the other the other. This phase was finally ended by the capture of Tunis city by Sinan Pasha in 1574, which abolished the independence of the principality and made it a province of the Ottoman Empire. Tripoli had fallen also to the Turks about two decades earlier.¹

Thus the old Arab provinces of Ifrikiyah and the Mughrib had now finally assumed the shape which they have retained into modern times. In the west, the central and western portions of the Mughrib had now become the empire of Morocco, ruled by a Sultan-Caliph; eastern Mughrib, together with western Ifrikiyah, formed the now recognizable Algeria; central Ifrikiyah had become Tunisia; and eastern Tripoli (with its dependent Cyrenaica). This whole area, from Morocco to Egypt, now was

¹ French works on this period—some of them translations or adaptations of original Arab authors—are very numerous. See especially, Ibn Khaldun "Histoire des Berberes," translated by de Slane; E. Mercier: "Histoire de l'établissement des Arabes dans l'Afrique septentrionale"; Paris, 1875. For Morocco: Budgett Meakin: "The Moorish Empire"; London, 1899.

controlled by a Muslim, but non-Arab, power, and as the latter had also made provinces of Egypt, Syria, Irak and the Hijaz, he occupied by far the most prominent position in the whole Islamic world. The claim of the Sultan of Turkey to be Caliph of Islam was, in fact, recognized everywhere but in Morocco, which retained its own rival Caliph. Politically, the whole of the Arab world except Morocco was now once more under the control of a single ruler, for the first time since the decay of the original Arab Empire under the early Abbassids. The Ottoman Turks had made themselves the rightful heirs to all the great Arab dynasties, except in the far west, the inheritors of the full tradition of the original Arab Islam : a heritage which has, in our own times, passed out of their hands again into the keeping of modern western Europe.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DARKEST HOUR

WE must now return to the "home provinces" which we left, it will be remembered, at the darkest ebb of their fortunes, in the middle of the thirteenth century. The shadow of the Mongol has spread across western Asia; Baghdad, the proud Abbassid capital, lies in the dust, Damascus has been sacked, and Irak and Syria, the garden provinces of the Arab world, have sunk to the position of unkempt and half-savage wastes. Arabia itself, desolated by the Carmathian movement which had been nursed by itself, has dropped back into the national sleep which had been its characteristic condition before the coming of the Prophet. The people of Muhammad, ready always with lip-service to his memory, had yet failed to pay regard to the greatest political lesson he had to teach them; that for progress unity is a first essential. Slaves to the passions of the hour, given up to dissension, they had paid the great price; the once proud masters of a great Empire were now but the dogs of that Islamic world which they had founded, and which still affected to model itself upon their national life. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust; the Arabs had come out of the black tents of the desert, and to them they had returned.

Nor was, from the Arab point of view, the immediate future to be much kinder than the immediate past. The story of the home provinces from the Mongol invasion to the modern Arab revival, that is roughly from the mid-thirteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, is one of political confusion and social stagnation, across which stalk the figures of the great empires of the Mongols, the Ottoman Turks and the young, rising powers of western Europe. Throughout this period the Arabs form merely the play-



“The Arabs had come out of the black tents of the desert,
and to them they had returned.”

things of stronger peoples than themselves ; their only political object, in so far as one emerges at all, to keep at bay the influence of whatever imperial power was nearest to them, by means of the age-old nomad trick of giving their support to every possible rebel against the imperial authority. Their undoubted success in this rather mild ambition must be conceded ; and the fact that it has contributed in no small degree to keeping their racial life fairly innocent of foreign matter of influence. But the price has had to be paid, in the continued desolation of countries like Irak and Syria, countries which peculiarly need the strong hand of a settled administration to reach their full economic and cultural stature. As a natural result, a blight has settled on the Arab world, a blight which is kept in constant being by the continual opposition of two social powers, neither of which is strong enough to do more than neutralize the other : the power of civilization, as represented by whatever governing race holds the reins for the time being in Baghdad, Damascus or Cairo ; and the power of nomadism, sheltering behind the fanaticism of a virile but limited faith, and the social ideas which that faith has brought down with it from ages now long past. Thus the Arab lands have become the natural living storehouse of ancient laws and customs long forgotten, which the conservatism of their sons has carried forward but little unimpaired into modern times. Hence the fascination of these countries for the archæologist, the historian and the social observer ; hence also the pseudo-romantic halo which they assume for the modern western man, struggling to escape momentarily from the harsh outlines of his every-day life. The Arab lands offer living examples of ways of human life which are only to be found elsewhere in musty chronicles or the half-forgotten tales of childhood. The visitor to the Arab world comes in contact with a new stratum of human society, the existence of which he has before but vaguely realized ; he enters another life, closely knit to this one and yet poles apart ; he meets face to face the daily round of his own ancestors. But, fascinating as it is to the onlooker, this intense loyalty to the past has its evil side ; it is linked closely with the complete stagnation which has been such a marked feature of Arab life for the

last six centuries. If it had ever been possible to persuade the Arabs to utilize their great natural gifts and still considerable energy in collaborating with their temporary imperial masters instead of thwarting them, their present position in the world might have been very different. Disastrous as was the Turk's administration of the Arab lands, not all the blame can be laid on the Turk. The Arab is, to put it at its best, distinctly coy and *difficile* : in addition to social gifts of personality, of which he knows how to make the most, he possesses a tremendous power of passive resistance to foreign suggestion or interference, which is well seconded by his command of natural barriers which have up to the present day always offered a difficult problem to settled governments. (The coming of the aeroplane and the automobile has been, however, the means of placing a most valuable new weapon in the hands of the settled government in this particular field.) As a consequence, then, partly of bad government, but also owing to a deliberate policy of obstruction for which they themselves have been responsible, the Arabs have remained throughout modern times a stationary unit in the midst of a moving world, going neither up nor down, backwards nor forwards ; maintaining through each epoch a constant level of a low tribal civilization, neither aspiring to rise above it, nor condescending to fall below it.

For the moment, however, we are concerned rather with the growth of conditions which made such a life of stagnation possible in countries like Irak and Syria which had always, up to the time we are now discussing, supported wealthy and cultivated societies, and more than once been the seats of world-wide empires. The immediate cause of their permanent decline was economic, having its seat, as usual, in political trouble. In Irak the irrigation system, which had been handed down from government to government and from nation to nation for centuries, and upon which the whole economic life of the country depended, had come under the later, weakened Caliphate to be more and more neglected. Minor canals were allowed to silt up and go out of use, and repairs to major ones were undertaken only under dire necessity and in an indifferent manner. The great

rivers began to loose themselves again from man's control ; floods became constant, and in years of heavy rainfall disastrous. Each serious flood helped forward still further the work of dissolution, since the damage done was only in part repaired. Syria, not so dependent as Irak on artificial irrigation, was sufficiently ruined by the inroads of the Crusaders and the perpetual rivalries of the Muslim powers of Egypt on the one hand and Irak and Anatolia on the other. Little wonder that when the Mongol flood had covered Irak and sacked Baghdad (February, 1258), it found but slight opposition farther west. Damascus, still the chief city of Syria, was captured and sacked and the horde swept south. But here a great shock awaited them. Egypt, which had borne the brunt of the expulsion of the western Crusader, was now to prove a bulwark of Islam against another, more deadly alien foe. In a series of battles on the edge of the Sinai desert, the Mongols were cut to pieces, and the reverse was so effective that they immediately evacuated all Syria and henceforward made only tentative efforts to regain it. The great Mamluk sultan, Baibars, conqueror alike of Crusader and Mongol, was now at the height of his power. Under him the court of Damascus, often graced by the presence of the Sultan himself, regained something of its old brilliance. The city's walls were rebuilt, and new mosques, palaces and schools erected. Baibars died and was buried in the city, and Damascus remained, throughout the Egyptian Mamluk period, the acknowledged second city of their dominions. But the very fact that Syria constituted by far their most important province outside of Egypt itself, led to a certain natural jealousy between Cairo and Damascus, the strain of which was increased by the rulers' habit of appointing their next-of-kin to the Syrian pashalic.

But just as the Mongol power failed to gain any permanent footing westward of Irak in Syria, so did the Mamluk regime prove itself unable to extend east of the Syrian desert. Irak was thus divided politically from her sister country during the whole of this period. For the most part her destinies were controlled by the so-called Hulagid Ilkhans of Persia, descendants of that Hulagu who had

destroyed Baghdad and overthrown the Abbassid Caliphate. Nominally, the Ilkhans owed allegiance to the great Khakan or emperor of the whole Mongol realm, who lived in mid-Asia in a travelling tent-court, which was one of the wonders of the age. But the Mongol conquest of China and their failures in Syria and eastern Europe tended to shift the centre of gravity of the Empire eastwards, and gradually as time went on their western dominions ceased to be of any importance to them. The later Hulagid rulers became Muslims and threw off all allegiance to far-distant monarchs who could now be conveniently regarded by themselves as "heathen." Gradually the Mongol aristocracy blended in with local Iraki and Persian strains, and except for a brief revival of Mongol power in the mid-fourteenth century under Timur the Lame (Tamerlane), who was, however, himself a Muslim, no more was to be feared from the savage and once-dreaded invaders of the steppes.

But the Mongol invasions, though not long-lived in themselves, left effects which were both profound and permanent. The Mongols were apt destroyers but poor builders ; as a consequence the whole tone of the countries which they occupied was irretrievably lowered. The mere result of practically wiping out the population of huge cities like Baghdad was a destruction of all the best elements in a people already none too fit to carry forward the proud inheritance of its ancestors. Commerce, science and the arts all felt the effects of this cumulative barbarian movement which destroyed in a few years the intricate life built up through the centuries far more effectively than the mere wrangles of local potentates, bad as these might be for the country, could have done in many decades. Local government under the later Caliphate had, it is true, been very bad ; but it had at least been Muslim, in tune with the local wishes and needs of the people, and so far as its dwindling resources allowed fairly scrupulous in regarding the elementary economic requirements of the country. But the Mongols came like a plague of locusts, blindly devouring and destroying. It was nothing to them that the irrigation system of an entire district might be ruined for ever by the cutting of a canal bank. It was less than nothing that the records of

a whole civilization, the artistic efforts of generations of brilliant men, might be permanently lost in the entertaining bonfire of a great city. Though the later Mongol rulers fully realized the fatal results of a policy of ruthlessness and did their best to re-create what their ancestors had destroyed, too much had disappeared to make the restoration of a country like Irak even possible. If modern western powers, armed with all the resources of modern finance and engineering, yet fight shy of attempting the restoration of Irak's irrigation system, we need not be surprised that the Ilkhans found the task beyond them. The old irrigation system was the result of long years of experience and the trial-by-error practices of untold generations ; the respect paid to it by its earlier Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian and early Arab masters had alone secured its continuous operation. Irak had been constantly raided by invading armies, and frequently the scene of civil strife, but the importance of the irrigation system to the country had been fully recognized by the contesting parties, who had placed it by common agreement, so to speak, outside the war zone. But the Mongols cared for none of these things ; the destruction of the major canals helped their military operations, and they consequently completed the evil work which the poverty and neglect of the later Caliphs had begun. The Irak, then, that we now have to deal with must be visualized as an entirely different country to the once-proud central province of the Abbassid Empire, the land which had attracted the covetous eyes of the original Arab invaders by its apparently unceasing bounty. It is a country now definitely of a lower class, living on a lower plane of existence ; a country in which agricultural effort is restricted to certain favoured areas surrounded by large steppes of pasture land verging into naked desert, hard and dry at midsummer, flooded in the winter months. Across the steppes and desert move continually offshoots of the great Arab tribes, always ready to encroach further and further on the settled land, and only prevented from overwhelming the cities themselves by the superior military equipment of the latter. Irak, in short, has become a second Arabia.

It would be surprising if such a country were to offer any

but an extremely dull political record. Irak's story has now little to offer but the petty quarrels and jealousies of local governors, and these need not detain us, since their general effect on the Arabs themselves was almost nil. The last Hulagid was succeeded for a brief space by a local Kurdish ruling house, the Jelairids, which was followed by the twin dynasties of the Black Sheep and White Sheep Mongols. For part of this time Baghdad became again a capital in its own right, nominally controlling Irak and sometimes western Persia as well. There was however, no stability in these dynasties and no permanence in the local political situation. A sudden revival of Persian national power, under the celebrated Safavid Shah Ismail, resulted in Irak becoming a Persian province (1509). Twenty-five years later, however, it was invaded by the Ottoman Turks under Sultan Suleiman. Baghdad was again captured by the Persians in 1621, but recaptured, and this time finally, by Sultan Murad in 1638. Shortly afterwards Basrah was also occupied, and the whole of Irak constituted an Ottoman province.

The long afternoon of Syrian decline, which had commenced with the Crusades and been temporarily set back by the brilliant reign of Baibars, recommences with the second Mongol invasion of Tamerlane (1400), who laid Damascus practically in ashes and desolated the whole countryside. Close on the top of this blow came another, this time from the direction of Europe ; a blow at the prosperity not only of Syria but of Egypt and the whole Middle East. For centuries past one or other of the Arab lands had enjoyed the fruits of the great commerce between East and West which, travelling in the old Babylonian days down the course of the Euphrates, had moved later to the Tigris, later still to the Arabian land route via Mecca, later again back to the Tigris via Baghdad, and then again, with the decline of security in Irak, to the Egyptian and Red Sea route. To the extreme commercial prosperity of Egypt at this time, to which all contemporary travellers allude, is to be ascribed that country's ability to make itself the centre of Islamic opposition to the Crusaders and the Mongols. Syria, as a vassal of Egypt, enjoyed a reflection of her

prosperity. But the foundations of the latter were now to be rudely shattered by the European discovery of America (1492) and of the Cape route to the East (1497). The effect of these great discoveries on the fortunes of Europe was wholly advantageous ; on those of Egypt (and, with her, of Syria), wholly the reverse. The Arab lands lost the predominance which the possession of the only great trade artery between East and West had given them ; with the loss of trade came the loss of wealth, the sinews of war and of all political or cultural activity. The Middle East forfeited that position as one of the most important parts of the civilized world, which it had held since the remotest antiquity. And the fall of Egypt's offensive power led inevitably to the coming to Syria of the one nation left in the Muslim world with some vigour and ideals ; the Ottoman Turks. Sultan Selim, having successfully completed a campaign against Persia, invaded Syria, defeated the Mamluks, and automatically added the province to the Ottoman dominions.

If the history of Irak and Syria during this period may be regarded as unimportant, that of Arabia itself may be described as negligible. Indeed, with the exception of the two holy cities, we know in detail little about the country from the fall of the Carmathians to the coming of the Ottomans. Arabia had slipped back to her pre-Muslim condition of purely local rule. The prestige of the holy cities gained for them only an extra-Arabian position which was marked politically by their falling to the lot of whatever Muslim power happened to be generally regarded as the leading one of the day. Thus after the fall of the Abbassid Caliphate, a kind of vague suzerainty over Mecca and Medina was assumed first by the Hafsids of Tunis and later by the Mamluks of Egypt, who still held in their power the "shadow" Abbassid Caliphs of Cairo. To both Mamluks and Abbassids the Ottoman Turks succeeded, and thus obtained automatically the transference of the suzerainty of the holy land. The latter was, however, more sentimental than real ; actually the holy cities were ruled on the spot by various members of the sharifal families, who, however, were constantly at war with each other, and unable to make

their authority effective over the tribes outside. The chief political care of the sharifs was the protection of the Meccan pilgrims from bedouin attack, and their weakness brought into being that system of mass tribal bribery which remained the only effective means of securing safe access to the shrines until very recent times. The growing poverty of the country as the Red Sea became less and less important as an artery of trade aided the political instability, for the reason that it did not pay any conqueror, Mamluk or Turk, to undertake the pacification and development of so inhospitable a neighbourhood. So long as the roads to the holy cities could be kept open at the month of pilgrimage, so long as the scandal of the low estate to which the holy cities had fallen could be kept screened from the Islamic world at large, there was little either to provoke strong measures or to attract cupidity. The sharifs and bedouin shaikhs had things all their own way, and could live the old, old life so dear to them of parochial desert politics and local storms in bedouin coffee-cups. Only in Oman and certain parts of the Yemen (economically the wealthiest provinces of Arabia), did the local dynasties make a bid for anything but purely local position. Oman freed itself from the Baghdad Caliphate about the year 1000, and was thereafter ruled for a century and a half by a dynasty of Imams hailing from the Azd. They were succeeded by a family of kings of the Beni Nebhan, but in 1435 the Azd imamate was restored. There were several temporary Persian invasions during this period, but a more serious enemy appeared in 1508 when the Portuguese under Albuquerque seized most of the coast-line, a new local dynasty from the Yemeni tribe of Beni Yariba retaining the hinterland. The coast-line in the early sixteenth century was divided between the Turks, who exercised a vague suzerainty down the east side from Basrah to Oman, and down the west over the Hijaz (the holy land) and the Yemen; the Portuguese, who held Oman, and various insignificant local dynasties. The position of the interior of the country remained wholly untouched by any outside influence whatever. Thus it may be said that during this period the Arabs of Arabia proper were deteriorating politically and probably racially as well ;

and if the end finds Irak and Syria in evil circumstances, it shows us Arabia itself in still worse case.

With the coming of the Ottomans the home provinces enter upon a new epoch, in which they find themselves, for the first time since Caliphal days, united under one government, and that government the strongest Islamic power of the day. We might presume from this the hope of the return of organized and civilized conditions, a revival of the glories of the past ; and it is a fact that for some years after the Turkish conquest a new spirit of progress, and a desire for better things seem to be manifesting themselves. But such hopes prove vain ; the story of the Ottoman period is one, in the main, of continuous and complete stagnation ; a stagnation so consistent as to excite the interest and the wonder of the outside world. For this the Ottomans themselves are largely blamed by the world, but there were other contributory causes as well. The diversion of eastern traffic to the Cape route, already noticed above, and the destruction of the agricultural resources of Syria and especially Irak by the Mongol and other invasions, set the Turks an economic problem which was beyond the resources of that age to solve. In addition, the sudden expansion of the Ottoman Empire in all directions absorbed the best energies of the people in military pursuits, and left no time or inclination for the quiet development of their dominions. The Turkish European conquests, too, aroused the alarm of the western powers, now beginning to be aware of their potential strength ; and the Sultans of Constantinople had from the first to struggle against the enmity of bitter foes which included some of the most powerful nations in Europe. Moreover, they had to struggle alone ; for their very position left them no place from which to hope for permanent alliances. The only other Muslim nation was Persia ; but Persia was a Shiah country, and therefore more detestable to the orthodox Sunni Turks than a Christian power would have been. At one time the rapid growth of Catholic Spain, which menaced the new Protestant countries, seemed to point a way for the Turks into the array of world alliances ; Elizabeth of England, for instance, when negotiating with Murad III for the establish-

ment of a permanent English embassy at Constantinople, laid stress on the joint interest of Turkey and England in combating the "idolaters" (i.e., the Catholics). Had Turkey produced a great diplomat among her sultans instead of merely a succession of great generals, it is possible that she might have found friends in Protestant England and Germany to off-set the power of Catholic France and Austria ; but the Ottomans of this period were far too arrogant and ignorant of the world to read the signs of the times, and failed even to realize the danger to themselves of the growing power of Russia.

The total lack of internal development which is so marked and curious a feature of the Ottoman Empire, distinguishing it in a very unflattering sense from all other world empires that have preceded or followed it, seems thus to be due mainly to the Turkish preoccupation with mere conquest and military glory. As individuals, the Ottomans showed themselves (contrary to the general opinion) men of ability and culture in many peaceful pursuits. Turkish architecture left its mark on several of the Arab cities, particularly Cairo and Damascus ; and the Ottoman contributions to the literature, the history and religious sciences of Islam are not inconsiderable. But the Turks were singularly unfortunate in conquering territory which contained almost exclusively races "with a past," the members of which not unnaturally despised them as *parvenus* and met their advances with a stubborn, though necessarily passive intellectual resistance. The Slavs, the Greeks, the Armenians and the Arabs were all conscious racially of high qualities and a great past ; and though they might obey the strength of their new conqueror, they need not respect either his history or his intellectual powers. The task of weaving together into an empire so conglomerate a population of many races with languages of their own and roots deep in the past, would have taxed, and might have defeated, an imperial people of the first order ; it was quite beyond the powers of military nomads like the Turks. Hence we find the Ottoman Empire almost from its earliest years degenerating into a mere collection of "minorities," usually possessing just enough strength to nullify the efforts

of the Government to introduce centralized control, and not sufficient energy to utilize the comparative liberty thus gained for any constructive purpose. Such was the case with the Arabs. From the early sixteenth century, when Irak, Syria and parts of Arabia and Egypt fell to Selim, to the middle of the eighteenth, when the so-called Wahabi movement heralded the modern Arab renaissance, the story of the Arab lands is merely one of stagnant tracts, for the most part ill-governed, certainly under-developed, and contributing little or nothing to the main stream of affairs either in the Empire or in the world outside. A brief historical sketch of each province taken separately will be sufficient to indicate the course of events.

The Turkish occupation of Irak, dating from 1534, was temporarily interrupted from 1621 to 1638, during which time Baghdad and all the central and southern part of the country was in Persian hands. From 1638 to 1917, however, the province remained under Ottoman control, subject to a temporary Persian possession of Basrah and to the growing power of the tribes. The French Capuchin monks settled in Baghdad and Basrah in 1619, and though they subsequently left the country, they established a French and Catholic cultural tradition which has continued to the present day. Up to 1704 the country, divided into three, and occasionally four, Turkish *wilayets*, was governed by pashas nominated directly by Constantinople, the Pasha of Baghdad usually enjoying a certain undefined precedence over the others. Although greatly decayed from the huge metropolis of other days, Baghdad easily retained its local predominance, and remained very much the largest of the towns of Irak. Basrah and Mosul were its only serious rivals, though Hillah maintained the local commercial position acquired by it with the decay of Kufa in late Caliphal times, and Kerbela and Najaf, containing the reputed tombs of Hosein and Ali respectively, were growing into large centres of Shiah pilgrimage. From 1704 onwards to 1831 Irak was governed directly from Baghdad by Mamluk or slave Pashas, usually Circassian in origin, who founded a kind of local Greek tyranny which was only subject in name to the Sultan. The government of the Slave Pashas was fairly

good, perhaps quite as good as the now depleted resources of the country would allow ; it formed a very definite improvement on the administration of the preceding pashas, who enjoyed no security of tenure and who could in consequence hardly be expected to take much personal interest in what was at its best a very temporary job. The Mamluks, on the other hand, were domiciled in Irak and accustomed to look for their career within the country ; they came, too, of an active and talented race, and their caste education made them free of the necessity to pay respect to local people or customs. Under their rule Baghdad became, in a small way, a capital of some distinction. None of the architecture of the present-day city is very notable, but the best of what there is dates from the Mamluk period, and shows on the part of the Slave Pashas a laudable desire to improve and beautify their decayed capital.

Three things combined to confine the power of these Iraki Mamluks to Irak itself. The first was the natural jealousy of the Government at Constantinople, which, too weak to dispense with them or turn them out, still bitterly resented their presence ; the second was the Persian menace, which threatened several times to turn Irak once more into a Persian province ; the third was the gradual and hardly noticeable growth of national consciousness on the part of the Arab inhabitants themselves, showing itself for the time being chiefly in the increasing power of the great tribes. This last movement has a special interest for us, since it heralded the revival of Arab political activity which has served in modern times to bring the Arab problem once more before the world.

In the middle of the seventeenth century Arabia proper, having remained politically quiescent ever since Carmathian times, suddenly burst forth once more into active life. The origin of the ferment, as so often in Arabian politics, is obscure, but it first began to attract the attention of the outside world with the movement of the Shammar, once an obscure branch of the South-Arab tribe of Tai, but now a large and independent group controlling all the northern Najd, or central plateau of Arabia. Urged on by civil strife and probably also by economic necessity, a large group of

the Shammar began to move suddenly northwards up the Syrian desert, driving the small, half-settled tribes on the borders before them, and creating considerable disorder in both Irak and Syria. In the former country they were soon in contact with hostile forces ; the Muntafik of the south, who had been gradually building up for centuries a predominant position over the lower Euphrates ; the Government forces of the central settled area from Kerbela and Najaf to Baghdad ; and the Dulaim and other tribes of the mid-Euphrates. They were thus headed off northwards and eventually drifted across the Euphrates into the Mosul area, where they have been domiciled ever since.

Hard on their heels came a much more dangerous horde, in the shape of the warlike Anaza, an old tribal group of the Rabi'a, which had, however, played only an inconspicuous part in the history of early Islam. The Anaza rapidly drove the remaining Shammar out of the Syrian desert and made themselves undisputed masters of it ; and the weakness of the Turkish governors made them soon the terror of the whole area. They dominated the trade routes from Baghdad to Damascus and Aleppo, and began to play a constant and (to the Government) often harassing part in local politics. For instance, they persistently raided the Shammar across the Euphrates, entering into an alliance for this purpose with the Kurdish Yezidis (the peculiar tribe of so-called " Devil worshippers," inhabiting the hills south of Mosul), and developing on the Syrian side of the desert a perpetual feud with the Druses of the Anti-Lebanon mountains. The growth of these great tribal groups synchronized with the increasing weakness of the Ottoman administration, with the result that they became the greatest power in the land ; settled civilized life in Syria and Irak, already at a low ebb, declined still further, until it was only in big towns like Baghdad or Damascus and along the seaboard of Syria and Palestine that anything approaching civilized conditions was to be met with at all. No Turkish pasha of Syria dared to risk the enmity of either Anaza or Druse ; and in Irak even the more powerful Mamluks failed to check the ravages of Anaza and Shammar, or to lessen the hold of the Muntafik on Basrah and the lower Euphrates. Thus both

Irak and Syria came to present the familiar appearance of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ; of a certain settled, cultivated area, in which civilized life was conducted at a level quite as high as that of neighbouring lands ; of a few large and famous cities, ill-kept and decayed, but still containing circles in which wealth, culture and refinement were not unknown ; and surrounding all vast areas of loam or sandy waste, over which moved the tribes, absorbed in their own pursuits, careless of the civil population, with little political ambition except in the direction of loot. At first sight it seems paradoxical that such an odd state of affairs should have continued for something like two centuries ; it is explainable only by the fact that at no time were either the Government or the tribes sufficiently strong to try risking conclusions with each other, and thus an uneasy balance of power arose between the two, which formed the political basis of local existence. There thus grew up a society, half of the desert and half of the town, in which a bedouin chief might be drinking coffee with a Turkish pasha one day and raiding his province the next ; in which the principles of right and law had no existence, and every person, public servant, landowner, business man, farmer or tribesman, had to learn to rely from youth upwards on his own right arm. No sort of progress, commercial, intellectual or moral, was of course possible under such conditions ; the only wonder is that the provinces continued to support any settled life at all. Probably the populations were reduced to the lowest possible limit consistent with the functioning of any form of local life at all, and once having reached this level they rested there.

But the unexpected activity of the Arabian tribes, though embarrassing to the Ottoman Government and distressing to the countries in which it was manifested, has this great point of interest for the student of modern Arab affairs ; it marks the definite end of the long national sleep which had characterized the home provinces and especially Arabia for hundreds of years. The political movements of the late seventeenth century and onwards, whether good or bad, advantageous or disadvantageous, are at least wholly Arab. The sudden irruption of the Shammar and Anaza into the

Syrian desert may be taken as a convenient mark for the *nahdah*—the great Arab renaissance whose effects are still with us and whose possibilities it is our acknowledged purpose to discuss. True, other tribes such as the Muntafik had been slowly accumulating power for many years—ever since, in fact, the lands of Sadaka, prince of Hillah, were confiscated by the Caliph Mustarshid and given to the Muntafik in the early twelfth century. One might date the Arab revival from the time of that ill-fated but romantic prince, and from the foundation of his new capital of Hillah ; or from the contemporary rise of other little Arab dynasties, such as the Hamdanids of Mosul and Aleppo. But these political adventures, though successful, were mere flashes in the pan ; they came, and were, and were no more. The seventeenth century Shammar-Anaza activities on the other hand lead on naturally to the great Wahabi revival, and thus indistinguishably to the Arab “ movement ” of our own times. They form the first outward and visible signs of the impulse towards a place in the sun which gives momentum to the Arab, as to all other, nationalist movements.

PART II
IN THE MODERN WORLD

CHAPTER IX

THE RE-AWAKENING

IN the preceding chapters we have outlined the origin of the Arabs and attempted to sketch, in so far as so great a subject can be depicted on so small a canvas, their expansion and dispersion about the world which followed immediately upon the ministry of the Prophet Muhammad in the early seventh century of our era. We have tried to vindicate—if it needed vindication—the claim that the Arabs must always be entitled to the serious consideration of the world as one of the leading nations and empire-builders of the past ; we come now to the more practical and more intimate question of the position of the Arabs in the present. Arab life, people know, still goes on to-day ; there are still sons of that great race about their daily business in town, field and desert ; doing their daily work as sailors, merchants, farmers, fighters, preachers, writers ; retaining to some extent, in town bazaar and village mosque, in crowded *khan* or secluded *harim*, the language, the manners, the ideas of their mighty ancestors. How do these people re-act to the ordered turmoil, the competitive and yet restrained disorder of the modern world ? What do they think of it all and of themselves ? Have they hopes for the present and the future, or do their thinkers dream merely of the past ? Some such questions continually present themselves to the continually increasing stream of Europeans and Americans who wander as travellers and tourists through the Arab lands and wonder vaguely of what like are the inhabitants of so many towns and villages of which they first heard at their mothers' knees. The cinema "fan," the novelette reader, the pantomime lover, the romantically minded person who pays fee in his mind to the "gorgeous East" which he may never see: all these, if they be curious at all,

must at times wonder how the real Arabs, the descendants of the heroes of the Arabian Nights or the Old Testament, fit in with the scheme of things to-day. To the serious student of international politics, too, the question is of moment, for reasons which we have tried to make clear earlier ; and to the English political student most of all. For modern Arab history is largely an account of the national revolt from the suzerainty of the Ottoman Turks, and its almost simultaneous subjugation by another, greater power—Great Britain.

Our task for the moment, however, is to indicate the main lines on which the great revolt of the Arabs against the Turks in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries worked itself out—commonly referred to by modern Arabs themselves as the *nahdah* or renaissance. For this purpose we must go back to the “home provinces”—Arabia proper, Syria and Irak—at the point where we left them in the late eighteenth century, taking in, also, Egypt in our survey ; for this partially Arab country, closely associated throughout with the home provinces, particularly Syria, was to be thrown by the events of modern times into an association still more close. Egypt, it will be remembered, was the only Arabic-speaking country (with the possible exception of remote Morocco) which retained in the eighteenth century any pretence of organised, civilised life. This gave her a natural position of superiority in the Arab world, and as the spiritual centre of that world still lay in Arabia proper, in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Egypt herself tended to look eastward across the Sinai desert to Arabia and Syria, rather than westward across the northern Sahara to Tunis and Algiers. The economic advance of Egypt which followed the “europeanisation” policy of Muhammad Ali and his successors in the nineteenth century, and the growing realisation of the political importance of Egypt in western European countries, tended still further to isolate Egypt from her western neighbours, still living their own primitive lives ; but it drove her even more markedly into the arms of her almost equally primitive neighbours on the east, partly because the ambitions of the Muhammad Ali family made possession of the holy cities

a necessity to them (since in Islam politics and religion are indivisible), partly because the Arabs themselves, in contrast to the North Africans, were beginning to show marked activity ; and lastly because Egypt herself, once the "westernising" process had started, felt the need of clinging to some more familiar landmarks to prevent herself losing her identity altogether. "A certain provincialism of feeling is invaluable," says Thomas Hardy, à propos of human character ; "it is of the essence of individuality." What is true of a man, is true of a nation. Arabia supplied to Egypt, caught in the net of modern life and struggling to adapt herself to its new needs, just that touch of provincial backing which she instinctively sought to preserve her individuality. Hence the Arab world assumes now a rather different orientation and appearance than that of the past. The western provinces, Tripoli, Tunis, Algeria and Morocco, drop out of the main scheme of things and tend to concern themselves principally with their own affairs ; Egypt draws closer to the home provinces, and at the same time turns in a new direction towards Western Europe, taking upon herself the rôle of interpreter of the new times to the Arabs as a whole. This rôle is supported by her central position and economic superiority, which becomes ever more marked as time goes on ; so that Egypt, having alone of the Arabic-speaking countries retained an active tradition of Arab civilisation, assumes naturally the position of cultural leadership of the modern Arab world. Thus arises the paradox already mentioned, under which a country largely non-Arab in population, and with a tremendously long native historical tradition of its own, becomes actually by far the most important individual unit in the Arab world. It is in Cairo that the pulse of the Arab nation can best be felt in modern times, although Cairo is not in itself an Arab city—nor even an Egyptian city ; but rather a meeting place of the world, "a dog," as a local wit once observed, "with nine fathers." But Cairo's wealth and inherited culture have tended to give her the place in the Arab world that New York holds with the English ; as a city which, though in many respects foreign, offers the best chance of a career to authors, artists and other intellectual

leaders of the race, and which in consequence comes to exercise a considerable, if not always acknowledged, influence over the language, habits and ideas of the nation. Just as the modern English tend to adapt themselves to the manners, ideals and outlook of New York, to copy American architecture, to read American magazines and to entertain themselves with American plays and films, so do the modern Arabs tend to respond to influences which are not actually Arab but Cairene. It may be added that Cairo, like New York, has never yet been able to follow up her cultural victories by a political hegemony, although she has made more than one attempt in modern times to do so.

We left the home provinces in the mid-eighteenth century under the domination of the Ottoman Turks, who were ruling, in name at least, an Arab empire which stretched from Basrah on the Persian Gulf to the western boundary of the old Ifrikiyah, and from Aleppo to the upper reaches of the Nile. The whole Arab world was, in fact, divided between the two rival Caliphs, of Turkey and of Morocco, of which the former was in every way the most important. The home provinces and Egypt formed a kind of Arab unit within the Ottoman Empire, a unit which, from the point of view of Islam as a whole, was capable of useful political exploitation. From the Arab point of view, the situation had two grave disadvantages; in the first place, though the Turkish conquests had brought about a much needed re-union of the more important Arab countries, the resulting body was not self-contained, but merely formed part of a very much greater unit: the Ottoman Empire itself. This larger unit contained many subject races which were, from the Turkish point of view, of quite as much, or even of more importance than the Arabs, who at this time had little to recommend them except their religious prestige as "the people of the Prophet." Secondly, the Ottoman Empire suffered from the outset from so faulty an administration as to make any thought of permanent loyalty on the part of the subject races out of the question.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, then, the Arab provinces had long settled down to that condition so

familiar to students of Oriental and mediæval European history. Nominally the Sultan-Caliph was the head of a mighty empire, covering almost the entire Near and Middle East ; actually Constantinople wielded little direct power, which was entirely in the hands of local governors, the various Mamluk pashas of Egypt and Irak, or, in the case of more inaccessible districts such as the Hijaz, local Arab *amirs* or tribal shaikhs. The various local potentates controlled their constituencies on frankly autocratic lines ; they relied for their support on their prætorian guards, who had always to be propitiated and kept in good humour at the expense of the civil population. Even rudimentary justice was unknown, and would not probably have been understood had it been attempted ; for so accustomed had the various populations become to living at a low moral level, that bribery, favouritism and corruption aroused little comment ; and oppression, if not pushed to the extreme limit, hardly more. Fatalism, always an Eastern weakness, had become the chief political consolation of the people. If the governor were on the whole a good man, content to fill only his own pockets and not those of all the harpies and panderers of the district as well, then surely it was the mercy of God ; if he were a thoroughly bad man under whose hand nobody's life was safe and no woman's honour respected, then surely it was a judgment of God. The vast population of quiet, patient peasants, whose labours have, from the beginning of history, formed the foundations of the ambitious empires that have lined the banks of the Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates, went on their daily way as their fathers had done for countless centuries, careless of the present, ignorant of the past, regardless of the future, obeying the deep human instinct to live, but devoid of the wish to live finely or well. The townsman, in his narrow, dirty street behind the great wall of the city which shut him off from the world outside, was in little better case. His trade, his religion and his social position bound him down as a rule to one particular quarter of the city, and he dare no more wander abroad in strange streets or foreign quarters than dare the timid peasant leave his village or his tribe. If he were a labourer, an artisan or small shopkeeper, his

whole life would be spent between his father's house (which might later become his own) and his place of work in the bazaar ; his only sport the companionship of his fellows, his only intellectual life the sermons in mosque, church or synagogue, his only excitement the current religious festivals, the baptism or circumcision of his sons, or, as a rare tit-bit, a big political " scene," a fight in the bazaar between rival factions of the Mamluk guards, an assassination in the mosque during service, or the public degradation of some poor wretch who but yesterday was the fickle Pasha's most intimate adviser. Higher up in city society would come the *ulema* class—the " wise men "—religious doctors, mosque officials, authors, quack doctors, petty lawyers, political hangers-on ; men with sufficient breeding and education to feel the need of a refined existence, but with little means to keep it up. Little wonder that they were as a class venal, unimaginative, subservient to their masters and overbearing to those beneath them. Those of them who felt the call of ambition would be faced with two clear alternatives : deliberately stifling it and becoming mean, disappointed and bitter ; or pushing forward into the only big career open to them, the terrifying world of local politics. There were usually opportunities for men of parts at Court ; but what was the reward ? A few years of favour, perhaps, under the wing of some nervous and brutal autocrat, in whom loyal service was just as likely to breed suspicion as gratitude ; then a sudden fall to imprisonment, torture and possibly death. Of all the government services, the army held out the best promise to men of fighting temperament ; but here the way was blocked as a rule by the pressure of imported slave soldiers like the Mamluks and Janissaries, who, organised in great military guilds and unions, and completely conscious of their power as the main support of the State, would naturally resent the entrance of an outsider into a military post of importance. The Ottoman Empire of this date presented, in fact, the unique spectacle of a great realm governed almost entirely by slaves or ex-slaves ; a society in which a free man was at the mercy of his social inferiors, the educated and the cultured deprived of any chance of legitimate worldly

advancement by the pressure of a class of people whom he had every right, moral as well as social, to despise. Little wonder that the lamp of life burned low within the State. The surprising thing under these conditions is, not that the Ottoman Empire went down the hill so steadily and systematically, but that it held together at all. The explanation lies partly in the strength of religious sentiment, partly in the atmosphere of pleasurable freedom which low administrative ideals give to large sections of the population, who find the disorder of the present regime more congenial than the possibly stricter and more law-abiding rule of a new master. The Ottoman Empire was, after all, the legitimate descendant of the old Empire of the Arab Caliphs, and as such was entitled to the affectionate regard of every loyal Arab Muslim. The prestige it thus inherited though powerless to save it from itself, helped to make the fall easier and less abrupt than it otherwise must have been. Even the most ardent Arab patriot, the most ambitious local pasha or amir, hesitated to proclaim open rebellion against the Caliph of Islam ; the most that could be aimed at was the creation of a new local principality under the suzerainty of, and with the nominal blessing of, Constantinople. In short, eighteenth and nineteenth century Turkey was a later edition of the Abbassid Caliphate of Baghdad in its declining years ; the Imperial power was non-existent, but the Imperial prestige remained, and with it a cautious ruler, by carefully concealing the real state of affairs from the general public, might hope to keep the mighty structure in being, even if there were no longer any real life in it.

The Arab portions of the Empire differed from the rest in containing a kind of third estate which supplemented townsman and peasant and despised them both ; the great tribes, whose nomad habits had received a new lease of life from the feeble misrule, or rather lack of rule, of the Sublime Porte. We have seen already how Arab national life, being in its origin purely tribal, obstinately retained this characteristic even in the days of imperial greatness. This intense feeling for the tribe, which in the time of prosperity had been a definite obstacle to progress, hopelessly compromising the efforts made to found an enduring

Arab empire, was now to prove, in the days of darkness and oblivion, the main feature of Arab political and national regeneration. The bad side of the Arab tribal bias we have already seen, in the wasted opportunities, the continual intrigue, the callous disregard of opportunity which marked and marred the imperial days. The good side was now to show its face. The tribal instinct, once an intolerable political nuisance, came to the rescue of the Arabs in their hour of peril and saved them. Other nations must have curled up under the weight of the disasters which overtook the Empire, curled up and disappeared ; the Arab, his roots deep in the nomad life which he had but temporarily deserted, had merely to retire to the desert. The tribes of Arabia proper, hard hit and almost obliterated by the second Migration which accompanied the great conquests after the death of the Prophet, and which carried off the cream of their menfolk to battle, death or a new life in distant lands, were enabled in the quiet centuries that followed to re-create themselves, to re-gain something of their old size and importance. In the healthy air of Arabia the man-power of the tribes was restored, and the declining power of the Caliphate and the weakness of the later governments offered full scope to the old, delightful game of tribal politics. The interlude of Sadaka of Hillah in the twelfth century showed the tribes beginning, so to speak, to find their feet again ; the sudden irruption of the Shammar and the Anaza into Irak and Syria five centuries later revealed the extent to which the tribes had re-acquired their ancient, pristine strength. Once more purely tribal affairs began to affect the political life of the settled lands ; for the Shammar irruption dislocated first of all the local tribal life of Irak, and then the settled cultivators. From this time onwards the government at Baghdad was forced to take continual cognisance of tribal movements and of tribal designs. The agricultural decay of Irak, and in a lesser degree of Syria and Egypt, placed the settled lands dangerously at the mercy of the tribesmen. In the north the recently arrived Shammar, and in the south the Muntafik practically dominated Irak ; every pasha of Baghdad was now bound to seek their favour and support. The power

of the tribes in Syria and Egypt was more limited, owing to the less isolated positions of these two countries, possessing Mediterranean ports and being in constant communication with the Ottoman capital and the outside world by routes free from bedouin control. In both countries, too, the principal inland cities, Damascus, Aleppo or Cairo, were reasonably close to the ports, and joined to them by roads far more easily protected by a feeble government than the long river or desert approaches to Baghdad. As a consequence, a much higher level of civilisation continued to maintain itself in these cities than in the remote centres of Irak and Arabia proper. An impartial observer, travelling through the Arab world of the time, would probably have reached the conclusion that any revival of national effort, if it came at all, would be more likely to manifest itself in Syria or Egypt, rather than in Irak or Arabia.

Such a conjecture would have been both right and wrong. The revivalist effort was to come ; but it was to show itself first and foremost in the heart of wild Arabia itself, and only later, and secondarily, in one of the more civilised countries — Egypt ; and the later, second effort was to be inaugurated not by Arab hands, but by those of an Albanian !

Somewhere about the year 1700 there was born in the Najd district of Wadi Hanifah, in the little town of Uyainah, one Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab, of the tribe of Beni Tamim,¹ a Modari, North-Arabian body closely allied in origin to the celebrated Kais Ailan. His father was a man learned in religious law, and as a boy his son studied under him, afterwards making the pilgrimage to Mecca, and later resuming his studies in the cities of Irak. For a time he travelled, visiting Damascus, Baghdad and also (apparently) several of the cities of Persia. His aptness and obvious gifts for the study of religious questions brought him naturally into touch with all the *ulema* of the day, and gradually he began to formulate his own doctrine, based upon the necessity of a return to the ancient faith of the fathers, to the plain teaching and homely practice of early Islam. Unitarianism, the worship of the one God, was, he

¹ Doughty mentions a report that he was of Anaza origin. See "Arabia Deserta," new edition, Vol. II, 425 ; London, 1921.

saw, the foundation—nay, the very structure—of the religion of the Prophet ; the worship of saints, the love of charms and fetishes which had overlaid the teachings of the faith with a veneer of Eastern superstition, had come later, to cause the confusion of doctrine, the haziness of thought, the corruption of morals which he now saw everywhere around him. The Unity of God, then, was the principal feature of Ibn Abdul Wahab's teaching, as it had been that of the Prophet himself : next he placed the importance of basing all life, national as well as individual, upon the commands of the Koran and the practice of the Prophet and the Companions. But, trained in the rigid school of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, most severe and uncompromising of the four orthodox religious legalists, Ibn Abdul Wahab was a fundamentalist as well as a revivalist ; he earnestly desired to see new life and new power in the faith that he loved, but the way to gain it seemed to him to lie backwards, not forwards. Every jot, every tittle of the law should be obeyed ; only so could a Muslim hope to achieve success in this life, and peace and happiness in the next. Perhaps not unnaturally, his reforming zeal was not received with all the sympathy that it deserved, either in his own district or in other parts of Arabia ; and he was, in fact, over forty when Fate put into his hands just the cards that he needed. Some miles from his own town, in the Wadi Hanifah, lay the small settlement of Daraiya, the seat of a shaikh of Anaza origin and uncertain position, forced continually to struggle for existence against dangerous and more powerful neighbours. The name of this shaikh was Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud, and to his court Ibn Abdul Wahab eventually repaired, at the instance of one of his disciples who lived in the town. " Like his contemporary in the Scottish Highlands, Rob Roy of Clan MacGregor, Muhammad, the third or fourth chieftain in the direct line of descent from Sa'ud I, the eponymous ancestor of the dynasty of Ibn Sa'ud, found himself in the middle of the eighteenth century surrounded by powerful and ambitious neighbours, of whom the most formidable were the principalities of Ayaina and Manfuha, ever contending with each other over the ruins created by their perpetual warfare for supremacy in

central Arabia."¹ The shaikh, it seems, was not at first particularly impressed with the new religious light that chance had brought to his court ; but eventually the determination and faith of Ibn Abdul Wahab began to meet with their reward, and his enthusiasm communicated itself to the prince. Of the progress of the mission in Daraiya in its early days we possess no reliable account, but its final and complete success was soon to be patent to all the world. A partnership was established between religion and the government, of the type so common in Islam. The religious leader's daughter was betrothed to the shaikh, and the two Muhammads settled down to their life task of infusing a new religious hope into the heart of Arabia, and of building on it a new empire. They were so far successful in their own lifetimes as to witness the overthrow of all their once dangerous neighbours and the extension of the Wahabi creed and influence all over the Najd plateau and into the eastern seaboard province of Hasa. The task was carried on by the next ruler, Sa'ud II, and his son and successor Abdul Aziz, the latter of whom startled the whole Islamic world by descending upon the famous Shiah holy city of Kerbela, in Irak, and sacking it, the Baghdad government being powerless either to prevent or to avenge the outrage. (Kerbela, as containing the shrine of the martyr Hosein, was and is a definite centre of saint-worship, which is of course anathema to the puritan Wahabis.) The prince, however, paid for the raid with his life, for he was afterwards assassinated by a Shiah fanatic in the great mosque of his capital, Daraiya, itself ; but his aggressive forward policy was continued by his son Abdullah, who invaded the Hijaz and actually occupied the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Later Oman and the Yemen yielded, at least nominally, to his warlike ambition, and at last it could be said, for the first time since the early days of Islam, that Arabia was united again under one ruler.²

But these events had naturally attracted considerable

¹ H. St. J. Philby : "The Heart of Arabia," Intro., p. xvi, London, 1922.

² For contemporary notices, see : Rousseau, "Pashalik de Bagdad," Paris, 1809 ; Corancez, "Histoire des Wahabis," Paris, 1810 ; Waring, "Tour to Sheeraz," London, 1807 ; Burkhardt, "Notes on Wahabys," London, 1831 ; Sadlier, "Journey across Arabia," Bombay, 1866.

and not always favourable notice in the world outside. Kerbela ranks in Shiah eyes next to Mecca itself as the holiest of holy ground. To the Wahabis the Shiah might be heretics, but to the Turkish Empire, possessing many thousands of Shiah subjects whose loyalty and respect for the *Dawlah*, never very strong, might disappear altogether if they could not be guaranteed the protection they had a right to expect, the raid must appear in quite another light. Mecca and Medina, too, belonged in spirit to all Islam, and not alone to the Wahabis ; they were under the nominal protection of the Sultan-Caliph, and their abrupt seizure by these uncouth savages might easily be regarded as a direct insult to the imperial throne. The Turkish *Dawlah* or Empire, which had stood now for so many years as the bulwark of Islam, felt itself at last shaken to its very foundations ; even the lethargy of the Sublime Porte could not but be stirred by the writing on the wall. But what was to be done ? Turkey was harassed by European enemies, and could spare neither money nor men for a campaign in distant Arabia. And so the *Dawlah* was forced to call to its aid the help of another Arab province, of whose modernist and nationalist tendencies it was even more suspicious than of the Wahabis themselves.

Ever since the abortive attempt of Ali Bey to raise Egypt to the position of an independent country, that province had been seething with discontent, which formed the outward and visible signs of a deeper restlessness ; a discontent with existing conditions which boded ill for the rule of the Sultan-Caliph. In 1786 the Porte was forced to interfere actively owing to the constant strife between the various Mamluk Beys, each one of whom now sought to emulate the career of the late Ali Bey. A violent visitation of the plague in 1791 helped to complete the material disintegration of the country. But the turn of the tide was now at hand, though the first impulse towards better things was to come not from Egypt itself but from outside.

On July 1st, 1798, the city of Alexandria was startled by the arrival outside the harbour of a large French fleet and army, under the personal command of Napoleon Bonaparte, then the leading general of the Directoire, the government

which had emerged out of the confusion of the revolutionary period in Paris. This unexpected move was aimed, not so much at Egypt herself, as at the Eastern communications of the British, with whom the new Republic was at war. A secondary object was the use of Egypt as a *point d'appui* for the dissemination of French influence all over the Middle East. France had retained a connection with Syria, through the medium of the local Christian communities, almost ever since the Crusades ; French missionaries had established themselves in Irak. The French influence over the Arab world was already wide, and the French tongue was tending to become the natural language for the educated and those aspiring to a European training. Obviously, a French Egypt would make an excellent central depôt for the development of future schemes in the Middle East, and it had the additional merit of cutting the British communications with India at a most vital point. A permanent French ascendancy over the Arab world might, in fact, prove such a check on further British progress in the East as to undo the effect of the earlier French reverses in India. The immediate plan, then, was to strike suddenly at Egypt, suppress the rule of the Mamluk Beys, hand back Egypt to the Porte, at a price, and permanently block any attempt on the part of the British to re-open an Arabian route to the East. The conception of the plan, which had been long discussed in France and had received the approval of Talleyrand, was bold, but the execution was faulty. The French fleet, which formed the army's only line of retreat, allowed itself to be outmanœuvred by the British, and was practically destroyed by Nelson in Aboukir Bay on August 1st ; and in the ensuing winter the Turks, whom Napoleon had professed to be helping, declared war on France. In the spring the French suffered another reverse at the famous siege of Acre, in which a small joint Turco-British force successfully defied the whole French army of occupation. In the middle of the summer Napoleon was forced to make an ignominious secret flight back to France, leaving his army practically to its fate ; it eventually capitulated to a British invading force which landed in Egypt early in 1801. Two years later the British evacuated Alexandria, taking

with them one of the leading Mamluk Beys to consult with the British authorities in London as to the best means of restoring the previous pre-French administration of Egypt. Thus ended the short French occupation, its only useful political result being the temporary cutting of the British mail route to India via Cairo, the mails having to travel via Syria, Irak and the Persian Gulf. It will be noticed in connection with this alteration, that the new route, like the old, lay through Arab territory. The growing British interest and interference in Arabian affairs which has been so marked a feature of modern Near Eastern politics is based actually on the necessity to the British of a friendly through route to India. To the controller of India, if he be European, the control of Arabia is an essential. This is a point of great importance, which is still, perhaps, not very fully realised in England itself.

The Franco-British duel in Egypt initiated by Napoleon had been watched by Turkey with much uneasiness, and once the armies of both powers had departed, she determined to assert herself once more. Not unnaturally, she did not share the British partiality for the Mamluk Beys ; one Turkish attempt to massacre the Beys had, in fact, already been frustrated by British intervention. To Turkey the Beys were dangerous and too powerful servants ; to England, friends to whom British help might be invaluable, and who in turn could be relied upon to keep open the Egyptian route to India against France or Turkey alike. The Porte now tried the experiment of sending officials from Constantinople armed with full powers. Several pashas were nominated in turn, but none of them proved able to maintain themselves against the passive hostility of the Beys. Unfortunately for the latter, they fell a prey to dissension at this critical moment, and marshalled themselves into two rival camps ; with the result that unhappy Egypt groaned under a triple tyranny, of the Turkish governor and two sets of Beys, each of the three parties being supported by a body of as lawless a soldiery as it would be possible to imagine. The result was economic and social anarchy. The situation called for a strong man to restore peace and normal conditions ; and

the strong man was forthcoming, but from an unexpected direction.

The main military support of the Turkish pasha was a body of imported Albanian soldiers, not slaves or ex-slaves like the Mamluks, but enlisted free men from the hills of southern Europe, brave, wild and barbarous. The commander of these troops was one Muhammad Ali, a young man in the thirties, whose career had already shown promise of greater things. Muhammad Ali's first encounter with Egypt, the country that was henceforth to be his home and working-place, was somewhat inauspicious ; for he landed with the Turkish force that tried conclusions with Napoleon's army, only to be ignominiously driven back into the sea ; from which Muhammad Ali was only rescued by the energetic kindness of the British admiral, Sir Sidney Smith, who was anchored at the time near by. Saved from this misadventure, the young Albanian soon recognised in the muddle of Egyptian politics a promising field for his own peculiar talents. The process by which he overcame first the Turkish party and then both the sets of Mamluks need not be detailed here ; suffice it to say that by the summer of 1805 we find him Governor of Cairo, supported by an official *firman* of the Sultan-Caliph, and in practical control of Egypt. An abortive British invasion, designed to prevent an alliance between Muhammad Ali and the French, was the next danger ; but it was soon disposed of, and actually provided a kind of Roman triumph for the Albanian, who rode in triumph through the streets of Cairo between a double row of stakes, each one of which was topped by the head of a British soldier. More suggestive of his sinister courage was the final exit of the remaining Mamluks, who, having been invited to a formal entertainment, were trapped in a narrow street near the Citadel and slaughtered almost to a man.

Muhammad Ali had shown conclusively that Egypt was to be allowed no other master while he remained the Vali, with or without official support (for he was four times removed from the governorship, in theory at least, during his career). He was now free to commence that career of conquest and internal re-organisation which was to make

him the first modern champion of Egyptian independence. With the help of French officers, he organised his own army and navy, supported by a new system of technical schools. So efficient did his troops become that all opposition vanished, and the recent disorder gave place to a peace so profound that Egypt's byways were as safe for travellers as the highways of contemporary Europe. Encouragement was given to Western business men and engineers, and factories became a common sight. By an audacious interpretation of Islamic law, which has always discouraged the private ownership of land, Muhammad Ali appropriated large tracts of the best lands in the country to "the State," the late owners being compensated by regular, if inadequate, pensions. Irrigation, which had fallen into decay in the disorders of recent years, was tackled on energetic, but not always very scientific lines. The cultivation of cotton, on which the wealth of modern Egypt has been chiefly built up, was introduced from the Sudan. Many of Muhammad Ali's reforms and innovations were unwise, most were carried through with too high a hand ; but his policy had the supreme merit of raising Egypt in the eyes of the world from a remote and disorderly province of the Ottoman Empire to a country important enough to deserve attention on its own merits.

The rapid progress of Egypt had not been lost, meanwhile, on Constantinople. A new sultan, Mahmud II, had come to the throne ; full of reforming zeal, and determined to centralise the organisation of the Empire once more and abolish for ever the numerous semi-independent pashalics which had sprung up all over the Ottoman dominions under the nerveless hands of his predecessors. The employment by Muhammad Ali of French officers to develop an independent army and navy, without the authorisation of the capital, naturally gave much offence in high quarters. For the present, however, the Sultan-Caliph was compelled by his own weakness to conceal his annoyance ; hampered on one side by European troubles, he had already begun to feel the full shock of the Wahabi rising in Arabia. The sack of Kerbela, though regrettable, might perhaps be overlooked ; but the capture of Mecca and Medina was

a threat which the Empire must face or go under. Sultan Mahmud now hit on the happy idea of enlisting the help of his too powerful, but still loyal, vassal of Egypt against the troublesome Wahabis. In the cause of the holy war, a loyal Muslim would hardly dare to disobey the expressed wishes of the Caliph of Islam ; and so hazardous a campaign might be relied upon to take the edge off even troops trained by European officers. By setting a thief to catch a thief, who could tell that the double danger might not cancel out, and the Ottoman Empire live to breathe freely once more ?

Such reasoning could not have been hidden from so acute a person as Muhammad Ali, but he was hardly in a position to refuse. Accordingly, in 1810 an Egyptian expedition was launched against Abdullah Ibn Sa'ud under the command of Tusun, the second son of the Vali, and then only a lad. In spite of an initial reverse, the Egyptians were able to drive the Wahabis out of the Hijaz, and thus Mecca and Medina were brought back to the nominal rule of the Sultan-Caliph, but only—and this point Muhammad Ali was careful to emphasize—by grace of the Egyptian army. Meanwhile the Vali had commenced a campaign in Nubia, to which country the few surviving Mamluks had fled, and the success against the Wahabis was not pressed. Given time to re-organise, Abdullah Ibn Sa'ud returned to the attack, and in the winter of 1813-14 inflicted a heavy defeat on Tusun at Turaba, near Taif. This roused the Vali to organise a second and much larger expedition, which he proposed at first to lead in person ; this task, however, was eventually delegated to his afterwards celebrated son Ibrahim. The Wahabis were no match for a great army trained on modern lines ; the battle of Busal, in the spring of 1815, gave the initiative definitely to Ibrahim, and three years later Daraiya, the Wahabi capital, was entered and razed to the ground. Abdullah Ibn Sa'ud was sent to Cairo, to grace the triumph of the conqueror ; as many as could be captured of his family, and of the other Wahabi leaders, were put to death. The first modern effort of Arabia to rise from the dust and put its own house in order had been peremptorily crushed.

But the Wahabi fall was more apparent than real. The lessons of the last few decades had not been altogether lost on the Arabs. The people had tasted freedom and self-respect, had learnt something of the possibilities of a wider life under the joint ægis of a national government and a reformed religion. To the world outside the Wahabi leaders might appear merely as dangerous fanatics ; to their own countrymen they were great political leaders, who had brought peace and, so far as sterile Arabia is capable of such a thing, prosperity. It is significant that, under this first Wahabi Empire, tribal quarrels had been reduced to a lower level than at any time since the early days of the Caliphate ; it is more significant that this condition of comparative internal peace was not again to be achieved until the foundation of the new Wahabi Empire in the twentieth century. Whatever we may think of the Wahabis on other grounds, we are justified in seeking in this remarkable movement the seeds of a genuine Arab national regeneration, sprung, not from outside influences, but from the deep need of the people themselves, ruling the Arabs by Arab methods, wielding the weapon of religion, the laws of the Almighty, in a way that no foreigner, however well-intentioned, could possibly hope to emulate. With the Wahabis, it may be truly said, begins modern Arabian history. With them are born those modern ambitions and aspirations whose circle has widened and widened until it has come to embrace the whole Arab world. Though the first Wahabis were vanquished, the movement, as we shall see, did not die. It was left to the son and grandson of Abdullah to restore the political hopes of their people by rebuilding, in part at least, the shattered fabric of the old Empire. More significant perhaps was it that the vision which had come to the Arabs, that they were not always to be dogs and underlings, that they were capable of some sort of a destiny of their own in the future as in the past, lived on, nursed by the vague and world-wide liberal aspirations of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER X

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE close of the first Wahabi episode in the early thirties of the nineteenth century thus left the Arab countries disposed roughly as follows. The Hijaz, including the two holy cities, and the key strategic points of Najd were garrisoned by Egyptian troops, acting nominally as agents for the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph. Asir, the hilly territory to the south of the Hijaz, was struggling successfully with the Egyptians for independence. The Yemen was roughly divided (as she still is to-day) between the hill-folk, who are Zaidite Shiahs, and the men of the coast, who are orthodox Sunnis. No settled permanent government was (or is) possible, owing to the mutual hatred of the two groups. In the meanwhile Aden, originally under the control of the Zaidites, had broken away under her own local shaikh, the so-called Sultan of Lahij, who, in 1838, entered into negotiations with the British Indian Government which ended in the cession of the port to the Presidency of Bombay. Farther round the coast, the undefined area known as the Hadramawt enjoyed actual independence under its own tribal chieftains, in spite of a hazy claim to suzerainty (pressed more energetically in the latter half of the nineteenth century) by the Turks; with the development of Aden, much of it tended to come actually under British influence. Of more importance was the next principality, that of Oman, with its capital at the old Portuguese foundation of Muscat. Under the able rule of Said bin Sultan (1804-56), Muscat regained its old ascendancy over the hinterland of Oman, and even made its influence felt on the opposite African coast. Zanzibar was captured and occupied, and a considerable navy and mercantile marine built up, trading in all directions. Unfortunately,

Said's death was the signal for dynastic troubles, ending eventually in the division of his Arabian and African dominions between his sons ; and the importance of Muscat dwindled in consequence. A treaty had been made with the East India Company by a predecessor of Said, and owing to the latter's fear of the Wahabis, who did actually succeed in temporarily conquering much of Oman, the English connection was assiduously cultivated. It was strengthened by the successful efforts made by the British to wipe out the Jawasimi Arab pirates, who operated from bases in northern Oman, known (since the conclusion of a " truce " between Britain and the local chiefs, under which piracy is abolished and the local *status quo* made permanent) as the Trucial Oman. Ultimately the Sultan of Muscat, like the Trucial chiefs and the various shaikhs of the Hadramawt coast, came into permanent treaty relationship with the British, who guaranteed them full local independence while retaining a hold on their foreign relations. A similar position soon came into being farther north in the case of the shaikh of Bahrein, one of the wealthiest of the modern Arab princes, through the revenues derived from the famous pearl fisheries ; over the adjacent mainland province of Hasa, however, British influence was less penetrating, chiefly owing to Turkish competition. Farther north again the shaikh of Koweit became towards the end of the century a close ally of the British, in circumstances to be presently described.

In the Najd, the great plateau of inland Arabia, the setback brought about by the Egyptian occupation was soon to give way to renewed activity. One of the sons of Abdullah Ibn Sa'ud, the Wahabi chief who had, it will be remembered, been defeated and captured by the Egyptian Ibrahim Pasha in 1818, had escaped the last siege and destruction of Daraiya, and by dint of skilful negotiation and guerilla warfare he was able, by 1830, to build up again a central Arabian State from a new centre at Riyadh, some distance to the east of the now derelict Daraiya. He was obliged, however, to pay tribute to Egypt and acknowledge the lordship of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph, and he never ventured to try conclusions with the Egyptian garrisons,

which still remained in certain parts of the country. His son, Faisal, however, who succeeded him in 1834, took up a stronger line. At first the fortune of war went against him, and he was captured and sent to Cairo, another prince of the Ibn Sa'ud family being placed on the shaikhly throne by the Egyptian authorities. But Muhammad Ali was by this time too full of more important schemes to relish the idea of further serious interference in central Arabian affairs—particularly as the interference benefited nobody much but the very Sultan-Caliph with whom he was preparing to try conclusions. The Egyptian garrisons were reduced bit by bit, and when Faisal eventually escaped from his Cairo prison and returned to his native land, he had little trouble in recovering his throne and driving out the few remaining Egyptian troops. Thus came into being the second Wahabi Empire, which was, however, very much more restricted than the first ; for not only did Faisal never attempt to extend his influence to the Hijaz or Irak, but he had to face a very serious rival close at hand. In the northern Najd lies the Jebel Shammar, named after, and inhabited by, that great tribe which, a century earlier, had caused so much commotion by the sudden irruption of some of its branches into northern Syria and Irak. At the moment the remaining members of the tribe (for by no means all had migrated to Irak) were under the control of two rival families, the Ibn Rashid and the Ibn Ali. One of the former clan, Abdullah by name, had been compelled to fly for safety to the court of Riyadh, where he played an important part in securing the Wahabi throne for Faisal. The latter rewarded him by making him governor of the Jebel Shammar. The temporary exile of Faisal left him undisturbed in his authority, and he made such good use of his time that he had soon acquired a predominant position among all the Arab princes of the day. His success was exploited by his successor, an able son named Talal. Under him the capital city of the Jebel, known as Hail, began to outshine Riyadh itself as the leading centre of Najd, and though he was always punctilious in forwarding tribute and protestations of loyalty to the Wahabi ruler who remained his technical overlord, he was at the same time busily

engaged in securing his own position. Controlling as he did the caravan routes to Syria and Irak, he was brought into direct touch with the Turkish authorities, to whom his attitude was as scrupulously correct as towards the Wahabis ; but this did not prevent him entering into a secret agreement with Egypt, for mutual action against Turkey should this become at any time necessary. Talal's death by suicide was followed by a short period of anarchy, ended by the assumption of power on the part of his brother, Muhammad, destined to be the leading Arab of his time. In the meanwhile Faisal's death had rent the Wahabi state in twain, owing to the furious struggle between his eldest son and heir, Abdullah, and his second son, Sa'ud, an ambitious man whose mother and wife both belonged to the powerful Ajman tribe, on whose support he leaned. Abdullah, defeated in the field, fled to Hail and begged the aid of Muhammad. This was promptly given, and Sa'ud, no match for the well-organized strength of the Shammar, was defeated and killed. But for Abdullah the remedy proved worse than the disease. Muhammad showed no signs of restoring him to the Wahabi throne, but instead quietly annexed his dominions and kept him as a prisoner-guest of the Hail court for the rest of his life.

But Muhammad, although now the acknowledged sovereign of all the Najd, was, like Faisal, unable to gain the wide influence of the first Wahabis. Bold prince as he was, he never ventured to invade the Hijaz ; and his efforts to gain an outlet to the sea on the Persian Gulf side were not successful. He was, nevertheless, a great Arab leader, and he possesses a special interest for English readers, for he was the prince visited by the three distinguished English travellers, Mr. and Lady Anne Blunt and the great Doughty.¹ The latter's account of the Amir himself in his great classic of Arabian travel is meagre—neither he nor the Prince appear to have been taken with each other—but his account of the daily round at Hail, where he stopped a month in a *makhzan* or public guest room in the main street of the Palace enclosure, forms a deservedly famous

¹ Lady Anne Blunt, "A Pilgrimage to Nejd," London, 1881; Doughty, "Arabia Deserta," London, 1883.

picture of life in an Arab town of the mid-Victorian epoch.

Muhammad's capture of the heir to the Ibn Sa'ud throne, and his practical extinction of the Wahabi kingdom, was not to be the end of the matter. Other members of the Ibn Sa'ud family were still free, and it is the rivalry between them and the Ibn Rashid dynasty of which Muhammad was for long the head, which forms the principal theme of nineteenth-century Arabian politics, a theme which was destined to achieve a world-wide importance later, owing to the gradual introduction into the struggle of Turkish, British and German interests.

Egypt, in the meanwhile, continued to be the only Arab land in which civilization, properly speaking, could be said to be accommodated. The nineteenth century history of Egypt is that of a continual struggle for independence, first against Turkey, and latterly against England. Economically she went forward as rapidly as she went backward politically. Under Muhammad Ali she gradually became to all intents and purposes an independent state, recognized by contemporary observers as the equal, if not the superior, of her nominal master, Turkey, and considered to have a possible future as a free and independent unit of the modern world. Although only an immigrant, and in no way much inclined to favour native opinion, Muhammad Ali became, through the very nature of his ambitions, the most Egyptian ruler of Egypt since the Pharaohs. In spite of much bad judgment in the internal administration of the country (especially in regard to his much-vaunted industrial "reforms"), he showed extraordinary shrewdness in his valuation both of Egypt's own modern importance, and of the direction from which danger was most to be expected.¹ His consistent enmity towards Great Britain (which was fully reciprocated) and his faithful friendship for France were due partly to sentiment, for he had come under French influence in his boyhood, and never forgave the British for

¹ For Egypt under Muhammad Ali, see Felix Mengin, "*L'Égypte sous le Gouvernement de Mohammed-Aly*," Paris, 1825; Murray, "*Short Memoir of Muhammad Ali*," London, 1898. Clot Bey, "*Aperçu general sur l'Égypte*," Brussels, 1840; Mouriez, "*Histoire de Mehemet Ali*," Paris, 1855; "*Mehemet Ali*," in *Cambridge Modern History*; etc., etc.

their systematic support of the Mamluk Beys whom he had overthrown ; but they were also due to the realization that England, and not France, was the real enemy of Egyptian independence. Hence the alarm with which the British occupation of Aden filled him, and his consistent hostility to plans for the proposed canal across the isthmus of Suez (plans which, strangely enough, met with equal hostility from British statesmen). Muhammad Ali saw with perfect clearness that the revival of the Red Sea route to the East would be bound finally to draw the unwelcome attention of the power that controlled India to countries which held so dangerous a command over this great sea-road. Nor was Muhammad Ali merely drawing upon his own imagination in this matter ; he knew that Great Britain had already once before been in treaty relationship with an Egyptian authority (Ali Bey in 1771), and had obtained from it the permission to use the Red Sea for her merchant ships. The occupation of Aden was another move in the same direction. And Muhammad Ali's instinct against Great Britain proved right from the personal, as well as from the Egyptian, point of view ; for it was largely due to Great Britain that his fleet was destroyed at the battle of Navarino (1827), and that his subsequent invasion of Syria and the campaigns of Ibrahim achieved results far short of his ambition (1831-41), although responsible for bringing all Europe within an ace of a general war. Though Muhammad Ali died a disappointed man, he had rendered one very real service to the Arab cause ; he had raised Egypt to the very forefront of current international questions. The outside world was forced to take notice of events in Egypt and Syria, and this in itself marked a considerable gain. It formed a public recognition of the fact that the Arab countries were awakening from their lethargy, that Arab affairs must henceforth count for something in the counsels of mankind.

Politically, the position built up by Muhammad Ali was compromised fatally by the incompetence of his successors. Egyptian affairs had reached a stage when they needed the most careful and inspired handling if the goal which the great Albanian set before the country was to be achieved. Unfortunately, good statesmanship was the last quality

which Muhammad Ali's descendants possessed. Ibrahim died before his father,¹ and the vice-royalty (which Muhammad Ali had succeeded in making hereditary) devolved upon Abbas, a son of Tusun, who was succeeded after a short term of office by his uncle Said; neither of these two Valis left much mark upon Egyptian history, except for the accidental connection of the latter with the negotiations for the Suez Canal, which finally, in his vice-royalty, came to a successful conclusion, in the teeth of the fierce opposition of England. By an extraordinary stroke of fate, the latter was later to become the presiding genius of the canal, largely by the acquisition of the very block of shares which had been allotted by the original company to Said Pasha ! In return for this helpful investment, and for the general and influential interest which Said took in the project in its early days, the French engineer of the canal, De Lesseps, named the new port of Port Said after his friend and patron.

The turning-point of nineteenth century Egyptian history was the administration of Ismail Pasha (1865-79), the son of Ibrahim and successor to Said. Ismail was probably as odd a ruler as even Egypt had ever seen in all her long history. He possessed in strong measure the ambition and drive of his grandfather, something too of his subtlety and all of his unscrupulousness; but he entirely lacked his penetration or perception. Though an ugly man physically, he possessed such charm of manner that few who became intimate with him could resist him. This natural charm, combined with an innate love of hospitality and the good things of life, offered a peculiar danger to an autocrat who was at the same time both ambitious and not gifted with good judgment. He continued Muhammad Ali's efforts to modernize Egypt, but, as in the case of his grandfather, with more enthusiasm than knowledge or good judgment; with the result that his court soon attracted all the commercial rogues of Europe, ready to suggest grand schemes at one moment, and to offer means by which they could be carried out the next. Ismail was acute enough to see that the

¹ Ibrahim's parentage has been questioned by many (especially Arab) writers, on the grounds of (1) Muhammad Ali's known partiality for his son Tusun; (2) the fact that Ibrahim's mother was a widow when Muhammad Ali married her.

military policy of Muhammad Ali was impracticable in his time, and that other means would have to be found to place and keep Egypt "on the map." A weapon, albeit a dangerous one, lay ready to his hand; the new, modern system of national loans, one of which had already been contracted by his uncle and predecessor Said. By the bold efforts which he made to modernize Egypt in all outward ways, by the building of new railways, roads and canals, the reconstruction of the cities, the planning of new residential districts and the encouragement of new industries, Ismail soon attained a world-wide reputation as a reformer, and for a time his credit was unbounded, though, from the Egyptian point of view, expensive. No Egyptian ruler since Saladin kept so brilliant a court, none spent money with so lavish a hand. The combination of generosity and good manners is always irresistible, and at one time the Pasha of Egypt could count all the monarchs of Europe as his guests or hosts. Naturally, the Sultan-Caliph was not too well disposed towards the tactics of his nominal vassal, but Ismail's extraordinary liberality even silenced temporarily the jealous whispers of the Imperial court. In the meanwhile, Egyptian life, at any rate among the upper classes, began to sparkle with all the brilliance of the Fatimid period. Modern education and the printing press invaded the country; Cairo began to take her place as the only great modern Arabic-speaking city. Ismail was, in fact, the father of the modern Egypt of the posters, the land of winter sunshine and great hotels, of luxurious river steamers, and the commercial exploitation of great names and memories. The Egyptian "season" became an established European fad; the hectic atmosphere of the international health resort descended upon the country. But at least rapid material progress was made; it is better to live even in a wealthy tourist resort than in a dead province of the Ottoman Empire. Success was the order of the day, success and the new life which the inventions of the nineteenth century were bringing to the country; and through it all rode the Viceroy, heading the season with his endless balls, dinners and entertainments, making the world marvel at the gorgeous extravagance of his life, bowing and smiling his



Modern Egypt, a Cairene Street

way towards the place in the sun which his boundless ambition led him to hope for himself and for Egypt. Of course a price had to be paid ; the national debt of Egypt, which was actually for the moment the private debt of her autocratic ruler, mounted by leaps and bounds.¹ The time came when she could not meet her obligations, and then came the deluge. Ismail had succeeded in achieving a recognized place among the rulers of the world ; he had even obtained a special title for himself from the Sultan-Caliph. The latter feared his ambitious dreams, but could see no practical objection to flattering them to the extent of bestowing upon him the obscure Persian mediæval title of Khedive, which his historical advisers assured him carried with it no natural prerogatives or privileges. But the new Khedive might one day be called upon to give an account of his stewardship, not to Turkey but to his creditors ; he might be a match for the Sultan-Caliph ; he was no match for modern finance. The credit on which he leaned to build up his structure of Egyptian independence, undermined his building floor by floor as he constructed it, in a manner which his lack of education probably barred him from comprehending. He had called up a spirit from the vasty deep, and now the spirit haunted him. The growing fear of Egyptian bankruptcy, now a matter of concern to the whole world, owing to the huge size and widespread holding of the Debt, led inevitably to foreign financial interference ; and that led as inevitably to foreign political interference. When Ismail, deposed by the Sultan-Caliph whom he had alternately flattered and defied, at the joint request of England, France and Germany, finally left Egypt on that sad summer afternoon of 1879, he left a ruined country lying at the mercy of its foreign creditors, a country whose independent existence had been hopelessly compromised by the very ruler who had cherished the ambition of procuring it.²

The rest of the story is well known. The financial and

¹ From three to over a hundred millions sterling.

² For all this period see : E. de Leon, "The Khedive's Egypt," London, 1877 ; D. A. Cameron, "Egypt in the Nineteenth Century," London, 1898 ; J. C. McCoan, "Egypt under Ismail," London, 1899 ; E. Dicey, "Story of the Khedivate," London, 1902.

political interference of Europe, at first effected internationally, led inevitably to the occupation of the country by the one power most concerned, Great Britain ; as Muhammad Ali had foreseen. Gradually the British, deceiving themselves at first into thinking that the occupation was entirely for humane and disinterested aims, came to realize the importance of Egypt in the strategic scheme of the British Empire. By an inevitable process, clear-sighted thinkers in both Great Britain and Egypt were forced to the conclusion that, whatever might be the fate of Egypt in the dim and distant future, for the present her destiny was linked irrevocably to that of the British Empire.

Thus the movement for Egyptian independence was still-born. It had its origin, not in a strong popular passion, but in the efforts of ambitious local rulers, notably Ali Bey, Muhammad Ali and the Khedive Ismail, to found an independent kingdom. Later it took a more popular and widespread form which still shows its influence to-day in various ways, from outrage and assassination to that fumbling for a compromise which has produced the post-war Egyptian kingdom. But its life is a hunted one, because the solid facts of the political situation are all against it. Egypt had her opportunity in the short period of political change from Ali Bey to Ismail ; she was robbed of it by the political incapacity of her rulers. Whether or no she could in any event have maintained her position under modern conditions, or whether she would have had to give way in the end to the ambitions, ever pressing eastwards of one or other of the European powers, is now merely an interesting speculation. One thing is certain ; the indigenous Egyptian nationalism of later years had nothing in common with the ambitions of Muhammad Ali and Ismail, though it may have derived some inspiration from their temporary success. This real Egyptian nationalism came in as the Cinderella of local political movements ; it was despised and disliked both by Ismail and the foreign bondholders. It first reached real prominence two years before Ismail's deposition, when the first nationalist newspapers, *Misr* ("Egypt") and *Al-Watan* ("The Nation") appeared, and for the first time there was to be

seen chalked up on the walls of Cairo the novel tag *Misr li'l-Misriyin*—"Egypt for the Egyptians." The growth of this native movement runs like a thread through contemporary Egyptian history, and though not strictly speaking an Arab development, but a local native one, it has had at various times a great influence upon the main Arab movement, owing to the unique position of Egypt in modern Arab literature and general culture. This new nationalism like that of Arabia proper, was destined to meet almost at its birth the hostility of a power whose interests compelled it to be antagonistic; in this case not Turkey, but Great Britain. By a strange coincidence, the birth of the one was followed almost immediately by the occupation of the other, an occupation which, by another strange coincidence, was made a final necessity by the lamentable handling of a difficult situation by the Nationalist leaders themselves.¹

Ismail had aimed at Egyptian independence, but he had no sympathy for local nationalism; his political ambitions were personal, not national. The interests of the ruling house, and of the aristocracy which formed their chief support, were wholly alien to those of the bulk of the people. They dreaded the interference of the foreign powers, and to that extent could be regarded as genuinely patriotic Egyptians; but they were all themselves of foreign extraction, and allied in sympathy to the Turkish governing class which it was one of the aims of the new Nationalists to remove. The latter, therefore, encouraged Ismail's deposition (somewhat to the surprise of the Powers who had brought it about), and utilized the inexperience of his successor to press for certain reforms, including that of the army. The condition of the latter was, in fact, a crying scandal. The natives, especially the *fellahin* or peasant class, were continually being called upon to fight in wars not of their own seeking, some of them in far distant provinces

¹ Louis Brehier, "L'Egypte de 1798 à 1900," Paris, 1900; Th. Rothstein, "Egypt's Ruin," London, 1910; "Khedives and Pashas," (anonymous), London, 1884; D. M. Wallace, "Egypt and Egyptian Question," 1883; O. Borelli, "Chose Politiques d'Egypte," Paris, 1895; W. S. Blunt, "Secret History," London, 1907; A. E. Weigall, "Events in Egypt," Edin., 1915; Lord Cromer, "Abbas II," London, 1916; Sir V. Chirol, "Egyptian Problems," London, 1920, etc., etc.

of the Ottoman Empire ; and their reward was the barring of the gate of local ambition by the concentration of all high military employment in the hands of the little coterie of Turkish residents. At this point the grievances of the nationalists met the natural ambitions of serving Egyptian officers. Hence the unexpected success of the so-called rebellion of Arabi Pasha, in which an Egyptian colonel of low birth and little education was able to defy the Khedive and make himself practically master of Egypt. Here was a brilliant chance for the real Egyptian nationalism. As in the case of Ismail, however, it was thrown away, though it must be admitted that the situation was one of extreme difficulty. Any form of native Egyptian political activity has always one great enemy ; the powerful foreign resident element which has in modern times, since the " reforms " of Muhammad Ali and Ismail, increased enormously in extent and power. The foreigners have good reasons for disliking nationalism. Protected by the immunity clauses of the Capitulations, a series of old treaties between Turkey and their individual countries, they live a delightful existence in a kind of *imperium in imperio*, free from the reach of Egyptian law or taxation, and yet at liberty to live and carry on their business within the borders of the country. Not unnaturally, they have always feared that a real national revival would mean the end of their privileged position. At the time of the Arabi rebellion, the foreign community, particularly in Alexandria, was so hated by the native that it had good reason to look with apprehension on any national movement. Nevertheless, had Arabi and his associates shown any signs of being able to guarantee law and order in the country, it is possible that the position would have been recognized, and the outcry of the Khedive, the Turkish official class and the foreign element would have been disregarded. Actually, however, the condition of the country went from bad to worse, and a serious riot in Alexandria was the signal for intervention. Only three powers could be considered as eligible to interfere ; Turkey, France and Great Britain. The dilatoriness of the two former prevented their seizing the occasion, and, since the situation brooked of no delay, Great Britain finally inter-

fered alone. The Arabi rising collapsed like a pricked bubble, and the authority of the Khedive was restored by British troops. The period of the British occupation, made famous by the rapid material progress of Egypt, and associated with so many illustrious names—Cromer, Wolseley, Milner, Kitchener—had begun.¹

A similar inevitable process of events was also bringing Great Britain into direct touch at last with the politics of central Arabia. Here again, as in the case of Egypt, it seems inconceivable that the Power controlling the Persian Gulf and Red Sea would not in any case have been drawn eventually into the vortex of Najdi affairs—for Najd, after all, is the heart of Arabia. The rivalry of the two houses of Ibn Rashid and Ibn Sa'ud combined with another political factor to hasten this intervention. This new factor was a revival of activity on the part of Turkey, which, thoroughly alarmed by the European penetration of Egypt and her North African provinces, determined to assert herself in her remaining Arab possessions before it was too late. The new Turkish policy began to show itself in the early seventies, when Midhat Pasha, then Vali of Baghdad, invaded the Hasa (then in a state of anarchy due to the collapse of the Wahabi regime), set up a Turkish administration there, and effectively countered the efforts of both Great Britain and the Ibn Rashid family of Hail to obtain a footing. An appeal sent by the Ibn Sa'ud prince Abdullah, simultaneously with his appeal to Muhammad Ibn Rashid, gave Midhat Pasha an opportunity to interfere in central Arabian affairs; he advanced into the Najd, constituted it a Turkish province, and appointed Muhammad Ibn Rashid the governor, thus merely maintaining the *status quo*. But Turkish activity in Arabia was soon to come up against opposition from a more dangerous quarter. An effort to extend their power southwards from the Hasa led to threats being used against the shaikh of Bahrein and his neighbours; but the latter were in treaty relations with Great Britain. When the Turks advanced southwards, they found a

¹ Books on Egypt under the British are numerous. See especially: Lord Cromer, "Modern Egypt," London, 1908; Lord Milner, "England in Egypt," London, 1906; Sir A. Colvin, "Making of Modern Egypt," London, 1906, etc., etc.

British gunboat awaiting them at a critical spot. The Power which had superseded them in Egypt had come to threaten them in Arabia also.

Meanwhile the Ibn Sa'ud family, driven out of their heritage by Muhammad Ibn Rashid, were not inactive in exile. The sons of Sa'ud, the late Amir, had chosen the Hijaz ; but a younger son of Faisal, and thus a brother of Sa'ud and Abdullah, by name Abdur Rahman, after a vain attempt to interest Turkey in the cause of his house, had settled at the court of the shaikh of Koweit. This little principality was governed at the moment by a shrewd statesman named Mubarak, whose great object was to escape absorption by the larger states which surrounded him on every side. The growing strength of Ibn Rashid was a serious menace to him, and now the increasing activity of Turkey provided another, for his proximity to Basrah made him peculiarly liable to attack from that direction. Early in the nineties Ibn Rashid annexed the oasis town of Aneysa, and thus advanced his boundaries up to the very edge of Koweit itself, at the same time defeating in the field the local independent tribes. Mubarak had not only shown active sympathy with the latter (an incident which was not likely to be forgotten by Ibn Rashid), but was now, since the Turkish capture of the Hasa, the only independent Arab shaikh controlling a Persian Gulf port through which much of the trade of the Najd was compelled to pass. It was obvious that Ibn Rashid would take the first opportunity of invading Koweit and annexing it; and his chance came in 1895. Mubarak looked round for a possible ally, and immediately bethought himself of Great Britain. But in the meanwhile he was met by Turkish overtures, in which he placed little trust, but which might at least tide him over the war with Ibn Rashid. He allowed the Turkish claim to consider Koweit as part of the Empire, and accepted for the moment the title of *kaimakam* under the Pasha of Basrah. The British, on their side, were a little diffident of entering into direct relations with an Arab chieftain whose alliance, though possibly useful, might have no real legal foundation. The Turkish claim that Koweit formed part of the Ottoman Empire was possibly not very strong, but it was probably

quite as strong as the claim of the Shaikh to independence; while the direct offer of the latter to accept British protection could hardly, under the circumstances, be considered.

The situation was changed, however, by the dramatic entrance of another factor. The ambitions of Germany had long stretched across the growing weakness of Austria, the Balkan States and Turkey towards the Middle East. Russia had opened up the long northern land route, which gave her direct access to Asiatic seas; England had by her sea power secured an equally reliable route to the south. Was there not room for a middle line, leading from Berlin by rail to Constantinople, and thence across the prostrate body of the Turkish Empire to Baghdad and the Persian Gulf? Securely based here, German ships and German ambitions would be able to wander across the Indian Ocean wherever their fancy took them. Such a base would abolish Great Britain's monopoly of the Gulf, threaten India and make Germany at one stroke a great Oriental power. It was a clever plan, boldly conceived; but for once Great Britain was ready. Acting under the authority of Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, the British Resident in the Persian Gulf (Colonel Meade) concluded a treaty with Shaikh Mubarak (1899), under which the latter gained all that he needed in the way of arms, money and moral support, and Great Britain gained the right of prohibiting the Shaikh's reception of overtures from any other Power. The agreement was kept secret; but when in 1900 the German consul-general arrived in Koweit to negotiate for a terminus for the new Baghdad Railway, he was met with a blank refusal. Shaikh Mubarak was now compelled to come out into open defiance of the Turks; but negotiations with the powerful Muntafik in lower Irak had secured him a second valuable ally, and the Ottoman authorities did not dare risk for the moment a possible combination against their authority which might have the support of Great Britain.

A crisis of some sort was not, however, to be avoided. An appeal for help against Koweit on the part of Ibn Rashid gave the Turks a chance to interfere. In the spring of 1901 Ibn Rashid marched on Koweit, while the Turks dispatched an expedition by sea from Basrah. A rebellion

at home compelled the retirement of the former, but the Turks reached Koweit, only to find English vessels of war in the harbour, and English soldiers on the shore. In spite of German pressure, the Porte was not willing to risk an open breach with Great Britain for so trivial a cause, although an attempt was made the next year to establish Turkish military outposts on Koweit territory. In the end, however, the Porte was persuaded to accept the British view; the independence of Koweit was acknowledged formally in an Anglo-Turkish agreement, by which Turkey agreed not to invade the territory of the Shaikh, and Britain agreed not to make it a British protectorate. Germany's railway project was to proceed, but for the present the terminus on the Gulf was to be left undetermined.

The two allies, Shaikh Mubarak and Great Britain, had won all along the line, and the joint cause was about to be advanced in an unexpected fashion by a third and hitherto quiescent partner; the exiles of the Ibn Sa'ud family who had, it will be remembered, sought the hospitality of the Koweit court against the overwhelming might of Ibn Rashid (an additional reason for the desire of the latter to extinguish the independence of the principality). The process of securing sufficient support to justify open hostilities against Ibn Rashid was a long one, but by the turn of the century it had been accomplished, and Abdur Rahman Ibn Sa'ud led a force into the field, while a diversion was attempted farther south by his son, Abdul Aziz, then a youth of eighteen. The venture was a failure, however, and Abdur Rahman, depressed at the lack of success and recognizing in his son valuable qualities of activity and prudence, publicly resigned his rights to the Wahabi throne in favour of Abdul Aziz. The move (which may have been urged by that shrewd judge, Shaikh Mubarak) was a fateful one; the young Abdul Aziz of 1900 is to-day, a quarter of a century later, the ruler of a Wahabi Empire greater even than that of the early stalwarts of the faith, and the acknowledged greatest Arab prince of his time.

The following years saw change and strenuous activity all over the Arab world. It was as though the unrest of the modern Western world had suddenly transferred itself to

remote Arabia. The rival causes of Arab nationalism and Turkish imperialism were coming to the death-grip, while around them hovered the various European powers, France and England temporarily united in one group, Germany in another, Italy and even Russia struggling to put in an oar as free-lances. From the early spring of 1902, when the young Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud succeeded by a *coup* in capturing Riyadh from the Ibn Rashid garrison, the third Wahabi Empire began to appear, in the face of bitter opposition from Ibn Rashid and from the senior branch of the Ibn Sa'ud family who were jealous of the progress of their young cousin. In the struggle, Ibn Rashid had the support of Turkey, while Abdul Aziz still retained his alliance with Mubarak of Koweit, and indirectly with the Muntafik of Irak (useful because they could outflank a Turkish attacking force advancing from that country), and with Great Britain. The Ottoman authorities made one big effort to come to the help of their ally, a large force being assembled at Basrah under the command of Ahmad Feizi Pasha, but it never got beyond the oasis of Lina. British diplomatic pressure caused the Turks to reflect on the strength of the opposition, and negotiations were commenced on the basis of recognition of both Ibn Rashid and the young Ibn Sa'ud. War soon broke out again, however, but a period of anarchy in Hail, the Ibn Rashid capital, gave an opportunity to Ibn Sa'ud to strengthen his position of which he was not slow to take advantage. In 1913 he felt strong enough to attack the Turks in Hasa; the Imperial power was in no position to undertake an Arabian campaign at that moment, and eventually Turkey gave him official recognition as "Vali of Najd and Hasa." At the same time he entered into direct relations with the British, an English officer (Captain Shakespear) being appointed to the court of Riyadh. Weakness and confusion still reigned at Hail, and thus the hegemony of Najd passed imperceptibly from Ibn Rashid to Ibn Sa'ud. The former dynasty was hard hit, too, by a new enemy on its other flank; by a successful revolt in the north, an independent shaikh of the Anaza, Nouri Shalan seized the oasis of Jauf, an important station on the caravan route from Hail to Damascus.

In the meanwhile great political changes had been occurring in other parts of Arabia. Ever since 1892 the Turks in the Yemen had been forced to fight for their existence against local Arab rebels headed by the Imam, the titular head of the Zaidite Shiah, who, since the effective Turkish occupation of the province in 1872, had remained hidden up in the mountains. So strong was the rebel attack at one period that all the Turkish garrisons inland capitulated, but reinforcements under Ahmad Feizi Pasha eventually restored order and reoccupied Sana, the capital. In 1904, however, the trouble broke out again; Sana was reoccupied by the Arabs, and a large Turkish force under Ali Riza Pasha surrendered. This reverse created a profound sensation throughout the Islamic world. Ahmad Feizi Pasha (relieved of his proposed invasion of Arabia from the opposite corner by the patched-up peace between Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashid) was called upon to return to the scene of former triumphs, and by August, 1905, he had succeeded in occupying the capital once again. Six years later, however, the Imam was again in the field, and soon had the Turkish garrison besieged in Sana; finally the then Governor, Izzet Pasha, came to terms with him and pacified the country, the Imam being allowed a special status as the head of the Zaidite sect. Meanwhile, to the north a new anti-Turkish Arab leader had sprung up in the person of Sayid Muhammad Idrisi of Asir, who from his capital of Sabia waged a continuous campaign for independence from 1910 onwards, being aided by the Italians during the Turco-Italian war in Tripoli (1911-12). The Arab cause as a whole was compromised, however, by his failure to reach a working arrangement with the Imam, chiefly owing to the strong objections of his Sunni following to the Zaidite doctrine.¹

Farther north still, in the Hijaz, a steady pressure was being applied to weaken the Turkish hold on the country. Although in theory a Turkish *vilayet*, ruled by the Vali of Mecca, its religious associations secured it a privileged

¹ For these various Arab rebellions, see Wyman Bury, "Land of Uz" (1911) and "Arabia Infelix" (1915); A. J. B. Wavell, "A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca," London, 1918; D. G. Hogarth, "Arabia," London, 1922; H. F. Jacob, "Kings of Arabia," London, 1923.

position. The sharifal families, so prominent in earlier days, still possessed sufficient local prestige to make it politically necessary to appoint one of them as *Amir* of Mecca, in which position they acted principally as intermediaries between the Imperial Government and the local Arab families and tribes. The holy cities themselves were not only free from taxation and the operation of the later conscription acts (introduced after the German military element became a conspicuous factor in Turkish affairs), but received subsidies from the Exchequer, as also did the sharifs and the tribes (chiefly the Beni Harb), which controlled the pilgrim roads to the shrines. The Turks felt the humiliation of their position keenly, and bore it only because the prestige of the holy land rendered its occupation by the Caliph of Islam a political necessity. The decision, in 1900, to construct the Hijaz Railway from Damascus to Medina was one point in a general plan to improve the Turkish position in the country. The struggle between the Imperial and local Arab forces grew more acute, here as elsewhere, with the dawn of the twentieth century, and reached a crisis during the amirate of Sharif Hosein, whose curious story forms an epitome of Arabian politics during the Great War. Destined to be first a local Amir, then a King and a world figure, and finally a despised and forgotten exile, Hosein was appointed to this office in 1908 on account of his known pacific and pro-Turkish sympathies.

In the Asir war against the Idrisi, a contingent from the Hijaz fought with the Turks, led by two of Hosein's sons, Ali and Faisal. At the same time the new Grand Sharif was not averse to enlarging his own sphere of influence; when the western Najd relapsed into independence owing to the struggle between Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashid, Hosein entered and claimed the territory. In 1913 his ambitions suddenly took a forward line, which coincided with a complete *volte-face* in his relations with the Turks. He sought the friendship of the Idrisi and even the Zaidite Imam; worked to strengthen his own influence among the bedouin of the Hijaz; and supported the Beni Harb in their opposition to the Turkish proposals to extend the Hijaz Railway from Medina to Mecca. What had happened in the inter-

vening years to turn so important and conservative an official as the Amir of Mecca—already an elderly man, with grown-up sons—from a loyal friend of the Young Turks and servant of the *Dawlah* into a potential rebel ?

Partly, no doubt, the growing weakness of the Turkish Empire, which caused all Muslims increasingly to doubt whether it had any longer much to offer as a bulwark of the faith. Much more, in the case of Hosein, the growing wave of nationalistic sentiment, not only Arab but Turk, which tended to make so conglomerate an empire as the Ottoman peculiarly brittle. One by one in the later Victorian and Edwardian periods backward European peoples had begun to take their stand on the principle of nationhood, as against the old mediæval principles of religious or cultural cohesion ; on this modern feeling, indeed, Napoleon's ambitions had crashed, and out of their ruin had arisen the individualistic world of to-day. As the sentiment spread, first Greece, then Italy, then Germany and lastly the little nations of the Balkans successfully asserted their nationhood ; and the new faith had taken root in one Arab country, Egypt, at least as early as the time of Arabi Pasha. From Egypt it spread by slow degrees into the other Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Progress was slow, partly owing to the poverty and degraded position of the bulk of the people, partly owing to the more intense opposition which Islam—a closer-knit and more cohesive religious organization than modern Christianity—was able to offer to any movement aiming at bringing divisions into the Congregation. But from the Young Turkish revolution of 1908 onwards Arab nationalism received an immense impetus from a similar movement among the Turks themselves, which aimed at supplanting the old, sentimental pan-islamic ideas of Abdul Hamid by a modern, Turkish nation. Hence arose an energetic effort to "Turkify" the Empire, which brought an immediate reaction among the subject races, particularly the Arabs and the Armenians. This again reacted on the Turks and produced the policy of harsh coercion which, in the form of the Armenian atrocities, horrified the world. The sufferings of the Arabs, which were also acute, particularly in Syria, were less noticed by the outside world,

partly because they were not, in the main, Christians, partly because they lacked the temperament and the knowledge required for successful modern advertisement. Yet all through the early years of the twentieth century, Arab nationalism was an active and a growing force, groping its way through misunderstanding, bad leadership, ignorance and even active persecution to the strong position which enabled it to take so signal an advantage of the chances thrown in its path by the Great War—chances which the Great Peace was afterwards to withdraw in so callous a fashion. There were, strictly speaking, two forms of Arab nationalism engaged in seeking for a means of self-expression ; one which aimed at a co-ordinated national effort from the whole Arab race ; the other whose object was rather what might be termed provincial home rule, whose vision was limited by the boundaries of the particular Arab country in which its votaries happened to reside. The latter, in short, was of the Egyptian type, and took Egypt for its model ; it was especially strong in Syria, the country which, more than any other, had associated itself with the modern profession of journalism. (An overwhelming proportion of the leading Cairene editors and writers are of Syrian birth or education, or both.) The success of the Lebanon, a part of Syria, in obtaining a kind of local home rule after the Damascus riots of 1860, when a large number of Syrian Christians perished, and the Powers interfered to protect them, was a stimulus to ideas of this kind. A powerful Syrian nationalist society was founded in France, and summoned several Arab congresses with the permission and encouragement of the French Government. But Syria was also an active supporter of the broader national ideal, aiming not so much at Syrian independence as Arab independence. Owing to Turkish hostility, the work of propaganda and organization had to be carried on underground, through secret societies, the largest and most famous of which was known as *Al-Ahd*. This body had branches in all the Arab cities and affiliations among Arabs living in France and America, and was recognized by the Turks as a dangerous revolutionary organization. It was probably this society which first introduced the Amir of Mecca to Arab nationalist

ideas; its members were certainly well represented later in the entourage both of himself and his sons Faisal and Abdullah. For the present, however, the Amir made no attempt to bring about an open breach with the Turks, though he did what was possible to extend his influence at the expense of theirs in the Hijaz; his son Faisal (afterwards the King of Irak) accepted the position of member for Jidda (the port of Mecca) in the Turkish Parliament, and the family gave no outward sign of proposed disloyalty. The movement for Arab nationalism went on quietly at work for independence within the framework of a decayed Empire, little dreaming that the day was at hand when that Empire would disappear, and the Arabs would find themselves face to face with a greater Power whose vital interests, in spite of a genuine unwillingness on both sides, seemed to cross and recross the path of Arab ambition in the weaving of a pattern of ever-growing complexity and difficulty.

CHAPTER XI

MODERN NORTH AFRICA

WE have now to turn aside once more from the main story to consider the fate in modern times of the countries which formed the original western provinces of the Arab Empire. To Spain it is unnecessary to allude again, since she has played no part in Islamic history (with the exception of her modern provincial campaigns in North Africa, to be mentioned later in another connection) since the banishment of the last of the Moriscoes from her territory in 1609. The Caliphate of Morocco, too, has played but little part in modern Arab affairs, and a brief résumé of her history will suffice. We left the country, it will be remembered, in the hands of the so-called Filali dynasty of Caliphs (the supreme title having been claimed by the Sultans ever since the extinction of the Abbassid "shadow" Caliphate of Cairo by the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth century). The first of the line was Muhammad XIV, proclaimed at Fez in 1649, but his brother Ismail, who reigned for forty-five years (1672-1727), is better known. A bloodthirsty but able tyrant, he also achieved fame as a family man, his sons alone running into several hundreds. It is scarcely surprising that dynastic troubles followed his death, but peace was restored eventually by an able grandson, Muhammad XVI, who conquered Mazagan from the Portuguese and built Mogador. His son and successor Yazid, the child of an English or Irish woman, and a tyrant of unspeakable cruelty and depravity, was fortunately soon removed from the scene. His brother Sulaiman II (1795-1822) is notable as the ruler who abolished piracy, which had for several centuries been the curse of Morocco and the terror of Europe. His nephew and successor, Abdur Rahman II, was unfortunate in being caught in the web of European politics. Trouble

with Austria in 1828 was followed by two wars with France (1830 and 1844), and a French bombardment of Sallî in 1851. Eight years afterwards Spain declared war on Morocco, captured Tetuan and imposed a humiliating peace on the new Sultan, Muhammad XVII. The internal condition of the country began to decline very rapidly, in spite of notable victories over the Berber tribes of the hills by the next ruler, Hassan III. In 1894 the Sultan was involved in the trouble between the Spaniards and the Riffi tribesmen of the Atlas mountains, and had to pay a heavy indemnity. Under Abdul Aziz IV, his boy successor, all real power in the State passed to the *wazir* (vizier), Si Ahmad bin Musa, who ruled with strength and wisdom ; but after his death Abdul Aziz proved incapable of checking Berber rebellion, and the climax came when a local sharif, acting in concert with the Berbers, captured and held Tangier as an independent principality. Of all the European nations, France had the greatest commercial and cultural hold over Morocco, and in 1904 Great Britain, in return for French agreement to British freedom of action in Egypt, agreed to the principle of French " penetration " in Morocco ; and France at once proceeded to land troops and " advise " the Sultan as to his country's administration. Protests by Spain led to negotiations with that country ; but an unexpected repercussion was a strong remonstrance by Germany, which led to the resignation of the French foreign minister, M. Delcasse, and the famous Algeciras Conference (January, 1906). At the conference Germany, supported by Austria, proposed an equal position and opportunity for all the powers in Morocco ; France claimed a privileged position, and England, tied by the recent Anglo-French agreement, supported her. Germany finally gave way, and an international agreement practically bringing Morocco under French protection was signed by all the powers and presented to the unfortunate Sultan. Meanwhile, the internal condition of the country was going from bad to worse. Raisuli, though removed from his possession of Tangier, was still free to carry on a career of free lance brigandage, which he made notable early in 1907 by the capture of Sir Harry Maclean, a British officer in the

Sultan's service. At Marrakesh a well known French resident, Dr. Emile Mauchamp, was murdered ; and at Casablanca the neighbouring Shawi tribesmen attacked the European labourers working on the new harbour and killed several of them. The French decided to occupy Casablanca and several other ports ; their occupation was hotly disputed by the tribes, and military operations of a guerrilla type continued for several years. Finally, in March 1912 the new Sultan, Hafid, signed a treaty with the French acknowledging the protectorate, and a similar acknowledgment was later made by the Powers. General Lyautey, the "maker of modern Morocco," was appointed resident-general.

Meanwhile, the territory to the east of Morocco, the eastern part of the old Mughrib and the western part of Ifrikiyah had been steadily coming under the influence, first of Spain, more recently of France. The connection of modern Spain with the North African coast dated from the collapse of the Muslim principalities in the peninsula itself. In other words, as the Muslim tide receded, the conquering Spaniards pursued it into Africa and established strongholds on the mainland, the first being Melilla, captured in 1490. But the Spanish hold remained fluctuating and uncertain, largely owing to the strain which the sudden development of her great empire overseas in America and the East imposed upon her. Even in the later years of her decay, her eyes looked overseas rather than in the direction of neighbouring lands, and it was only when the Spanish-American war of 1898 deprived her of every vestige of authority across the ocean that she began again to look for possible colonies nearer home.

The history of modern North Africa may be said to commence with the conquest in 1516 of the city of Algiers by the Ottoman Turkish corsair Aruj, who, with his better known brother and successor Khair ud-Din Barbarossa, laid the foundations of the Ottoman Empire in the West. At first the conquest of the littoral was a private enterprise of the two brothers, but Khair ud-Din soon saw the advantage of offering his new possessions to the Sultan of Turkey, by which move he gained the right to the military support of

the whole Empire, as well as the title for himself of Beylerbey of Algiers. The subjugation of the country was continued by his successors, and the defeat of the Spanish Emperor Charles V before Algiers in 1521 threw the only possible rival of the Turks out of the running. The Ottomans later attempted to invade Morocco, but here local opposition was too strong for them, and they were never able to gain any foothold in the country.

The Turkish rule of Algeria (as the country round Algiers was now called) continued uninterruptedly until 1830. Almost from the first, however, it was extremely local in character, and the various beylerbeys, beys and deys who ruled there, though Turks by birth, gave only a nominal allegiance to Constantinople. The beylerbeys, in fact, disguised their ambitions so thinly that the Porte grew alarmed and, in 1587, abolished the office in favour of pashas serving for a three-year period only. The impermanence of the pashas' position led its holders rather towards the gratification of their acquisitiveness than to political designs, and this new orientation exactly suited the purposes of Constantinople, which did not mind how much its officials squeezed out of the unfortunate provincials, so long as they remained loyal subjects of the Sultan-Caliph. But the system inevitably provoked local reaction, which took the form of the transference of all real power to the Aghas, or chiefs of the militia, which was formed entirely of Turkish janissaries. These soldiers had the advantage of the Pasha in having a certain amount of local connection and backing, because, although they were not natives, they spent their whole careers in the province. The Pasha thus remained, but enjoyed an influence which steadily became more purely honorary. Soon, however, a still more formidable local power arose to challenge the military element. For some years all the wealth in the coast towns had been accumulating in the hands of the *ra'is* or trades unions of corsairs and pirates. Piracy had for several generations been the principal local industry of the coast settlements, particularly the city of Algiers itself; the trade had its roots in the *jihad* or holy war against Christian Spain in the sixteenth century, but it rapidly lost any religious

significance or connection, and came to be merely a highly-organised way of making money. The disturbed condition of the Mediterranean during this period, and the feebleness of the European powers, gave it unsurpassed opportunity and freedom of action. The trade reached its limit of prosperity in the first half of the seventeenth century, when even the coasts of the European mainland opposite were not free from the attacks of the Algerine corsairs. To maintain their position on the seas the pirate leaders were compelled to enlist large bodies of daring and skilful fighting men, recruited from all over the world, and not unnaturally they soon took to using them on land to assert their position against the pretensions of the Aghas and their Turkish militiamen. In 1671 they killed the last of the Aghas and elected a head of the state of their own, whom they termed a Dey. By this time, however, the power of the corsairs themselves was already on the decline. The growth of the great modern maritime powers, particularly France and England, made piracy less profitable and more dangerous. Organised attacks on the pirate strongholds were made by Blake in 1659 and by the French in 1664 and onwards, and respect for the flags of England and France enforced. The smaller powers, however, still remained helpless against the highly skilled organisation of the pirates, and usually purchased immunity by an annual subsidy. But the revenues of the corsairs continued to decline, partly owing to the increasing concentration of ships in the hands of France and England, partly owing to the general decay of the Mediterranean as a trade-route owing to the opening-up of the Cape route to the East. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Janissaries began to regain their influence, and from 1700 onwards we find the Deys elected by the soldiers and not by the corsairs. At this time the Pashas had disappeared altogether, the Porte now contenting itself with dispatching a *caftan* of honour to each new Dey on election. But the power of the militia was also rather precarious, partly because of the growth of a local class of *Kuloghliis*, or half-castes of Turkish soldier-fathers and native mothers, and partly because of the increasing resentment of the whole local population at the growth of taxation, made necessary

by the decline in pirate revenue and the disorganisation of the provinces inland. Nominally, the latter were governed by three Beys, ruling three of the four provinces into which Algeria was divided (the fourth, that of the district of Algiers, being regarded as the home province of the Dey himself). The Beys were appointed by the Dey, and came directly under his authority. They reported and remitted taxation direct to Algiers, but were not compelled to appear there in person except every third year. Not infrequently they ruled their *beyliks* as practically independent sovereigns; some of the Beys of Oran and Constantine openly flouted the Dey's commands. Meanwhile the great tribes, Arab or Berber, were at no time under the direct control of the State, but were either entirely independent or tied to the government merely by alliance or vassalage. Towards the tribes the Deys invariably employed the pernicious Turkish system of *divide et impera*, with fatally easy results in so mixed a population. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Turkish Algerian State steadily went down the hill; the marvel is, as in the case of the parent Ottoman Empire itself, that it lasted so long.¹

But Nemesis came in the early years of the nineteenth century. The chaos re-created in the Mediterranean by the Napoleonic wars gave a tremendous fillip to the pirate trade, and conditions at last became so scandalous that the public opinion of Europe insisted on joint action being considered to break the power of the corsairs. The question was reviewed by the general peace congresses of Vienna and Aix-la-Chapelle, the city of Algiers itself having been previously bombarded by Lord Exmouth. No definite result was reached, however, owing to the mutual suspicions of the Powers; joint naval action would have meant the appearance of Russian ships in the Mediterranean to which England was unwilling to consent. A joint demonstration by French and British ships was made in 1819, but for eleven years more the pirate fleets continued their depredations. Then suddenly they were brought

¹ For Algeria under the Turks, see: de Grammont, "Histoire d'Alger sous la domination turque," Paris, 1886; Faure-Biguet, "L'Afrique septentrionale sous la domination musulmane," Paris, 1905; Lane-Poole, "The Barbary Corsairs," London, 1890.

face to face by circumstances, not with a jealous and divided Europe, but with one strong and determined Power.

As so often in history, the governing classes of Algeria hastened the day of their fate by almost deliberate imprudence. The ruling Dey, Hosein, came into collision with the consular authorities of France on the question of certain debts contracted by France to two Algerine Jews. The protracted negotiations irritated the Dey, who rose from a meeting in a rage and struck the French consul, M. Deval, on the face with his fly-whip. France immediately blockaded the port of Algiers, and was only prevented from stronger action by lack of agreement on the part of her Ministers. This was made good, however, by a further foolish action on the part of the Algerines, who, in the summer of 1829, fired on a French ship carrying a flag of truce. This roused the French nation to fury, and by the same day next year a French force had landed in Algeria, defeated the Dey's army and occupied Algiers. The Dey and the unmarried members of the Janissary militia were deported to Turkey, and the city (in the face of strong Turkish protests) placed under French control—a control which has continued without intermission to the present day.

Circumstances, however, prevented the French occupation penetrating for the time being very deeply into the country. It had serious enemies to meet; the natural annoyance of Turkey, sometimes disguised but always a potential source of mischief; the hostility of the natives who were at times very ably led; and the political disorganisation of France herself. The very month which celebrated the capture of Algiers saw also the "July revolution" in Paris. The new government, fearing the expense and responsibility of continued occupation, and yet realising that it formed the only sure means of stamping out the pirate nuisance, finally compromised with a policy of "restricted occupation." Fortunately for French colonial ambitions, the situation was altered once more by the renewed folly of the Algerines. Attacks on the French led to reprisals, and these again to further reprisals; more French troops had to be imported; further native victories led to still more active French measures "to avenge the

honour of the flag." Like the British later on in Egypt, the French were gradually led into a political *impasse* from which there was only one honourable mode of escape : that way they courageously took, and it led them to an African empire.

The great name of the early French occupation is that of General Bertrand Clausel, perhaps the first Frenchman to dream of African dominion ; certainly the first to carry it into execution. The French held Algiers, but not Algeria ; the Dey had gone but the Beys remained. General Clausel knew that his feeble resources would not permit of an organised attack on the Beys, but he entered into negotiation with them and began to work steadily for the extension of French influence through the quiet pressure of superior *morale*. At home, however, his activities frightened the Government, who regarded Algeria merely as an "embarrassing legacy," and he was recalled. In 1834 the tide turned once more ; France had regained self-confidence and by a decree of that year the possessions in North Africa were officially recognised and their administration defined. The same year, curiously enough, brought into the field a young Berber chieftain who was destined to go down to history as the most determined and effective foe of France in North Africa : Abdul Kadir, the Amir of Muscara.

The next fifteen years is roughly covered by a three-handed struggle between the French, the Bey of Constantine (who retired from the field comparatively early), and Abdul Kadir. The recall of General Clausel led to the defeat of Abdul Kadir and the French occupation of Muscara and Tlemcen (the old capital of the Abdul Wad dynasty of Tagrart sultans), but the Amir was still thought powerful enough to deserve propitiation, and the French recognised his "special position" by treaty, reserving to themselves only certain coast towns. A further campaign opened by Abdul Kadir in 1839 led, however, to his undoing. The next year a new French general—Bugeaud—arrived on the scene, with very definite ideas for a solution of the Algerine problem. By 1843 Abdul Kadir had lost all his interior strongholds and had been driven into Morocco, which country he induced to

declare war on France. Though Morocco was soon out of the game, Abdul Kadir continued the struggle, though he was now definitely on the losing side. He enjoyed a temporary success again by playing on the fanaticism of the tribes, but he could make no permanent headway ; and the end came when he returned to Morocco, only to be driven out again by the alarmed Sultan. In the winter of 1847 he surrendered, but not to his old enemy, Bugeaud ; the latter, having failed to gain the adoption of his ideas regarding the administration of Algeria, had resigned and departed.

For the next ten years the French made slow but continuous progress. Some of the inner oases were subdued, the mountainous tract of the Labylia occupied and several small risings stamped out. With the coming of the Second Empire, Algeria began to loom large in the eyes of the French public, and the first French recognition of an "Arab problem" becomes noticeable. Napoleon III openly spoke of himself as Emperor of the Arabs as well as the French ; European colonisation of Algeria was *démodé* at the French court, and vague dreams of a revived Arab Empire under French protection were in the ascendant. Not unnaturally, Napoleon was extremely popular in Algeria, and his fall and the events of the Franco-Prussian war were a terrible blow to French prestige. The result was apparent in 1871 when the whole of the Kabylia tribes rose *en masse* and many families of French colonists were massacred ; a serious rising of the Beni Madassir in another part of the country soon followed. Considering the weakened position of France, the rebellions were put down with surprising ease ; and France gained a great opportunity of obtaining more land for her colonists by the sequestration of the estates of the rebel shaikhs.

These rebellions were the signal for a complete reversal of the Napoleonic policy, and a return to that of Clausel and Bugeaud. No more is heard of a neo-Arab empire ; Algeria is to be closely colonised and directly administered. This policy reached its zenith in the decrees of *rattachement* of 1881, since when a decline is noticeable. The later policy of France has been rather in the direction of a mild decentralisation, coupled with greater activity on the

part of the home Government in pushing on into the Sahara beyond. In 1890 the British formally acknowledged the western Sahara as a French "zone," and within the next decade the conquest of the desert oases was completed, and French Algeria joined to French West Africa.

The mark of the French occupation, as in the case of the British in Egypt, has been the notable commercial progress of the country. This has largely been the work of the Government and secondarily of the European colonists; the natives, with the exception of the Jews, have played little part in it. Nor, since the fall of Napoleon III, has the French Government made much effort to induce them to do so. Actually, Algeria is still governed directly by the French Chamber in Paris, to which she has the right of election both of senators and deputies. (Certain outlying districts, and the whole of the Sahara, are administered directly by military officers appointed by the Republic.) This right is confined, however, to "citizens," which category includes the native Jews but not the Muslims; as the latter number five-sixths of the whole population, the government can scarcely be said as yet to be very representative. The Muslims as "subjects" however, are directly represented on all the local governing bodies, the *conseils généraux* of the *Départements*, the municipalities and so on, and also serve on the Financial Delegation which, with the Governor-General, prepares the annual budget; the latter, by a peculiar arrangement, has to be authorised by the French Chambers, which do not, however, discuss it. Until quite recently "subjects" were taxed differently from "citizens," being levied under the system of *impôts arabes*, which were, roughly, the old Muslim taxes taken over *en bloc* from the Turks; this system has now been abolished, and a uniform system of taxation for all substituted. There is still, however, a dual judicial system, French and Islamic, but appeal in both lies only to the French High Court of Algiers. As has happened in all modern Islamic countries, the Muslim courts tend to lose ground as compared with the French, owing to the failure of Islamic law to adapt itself to modern conditions. The system of trial by jury is in force in certain criminal courts,

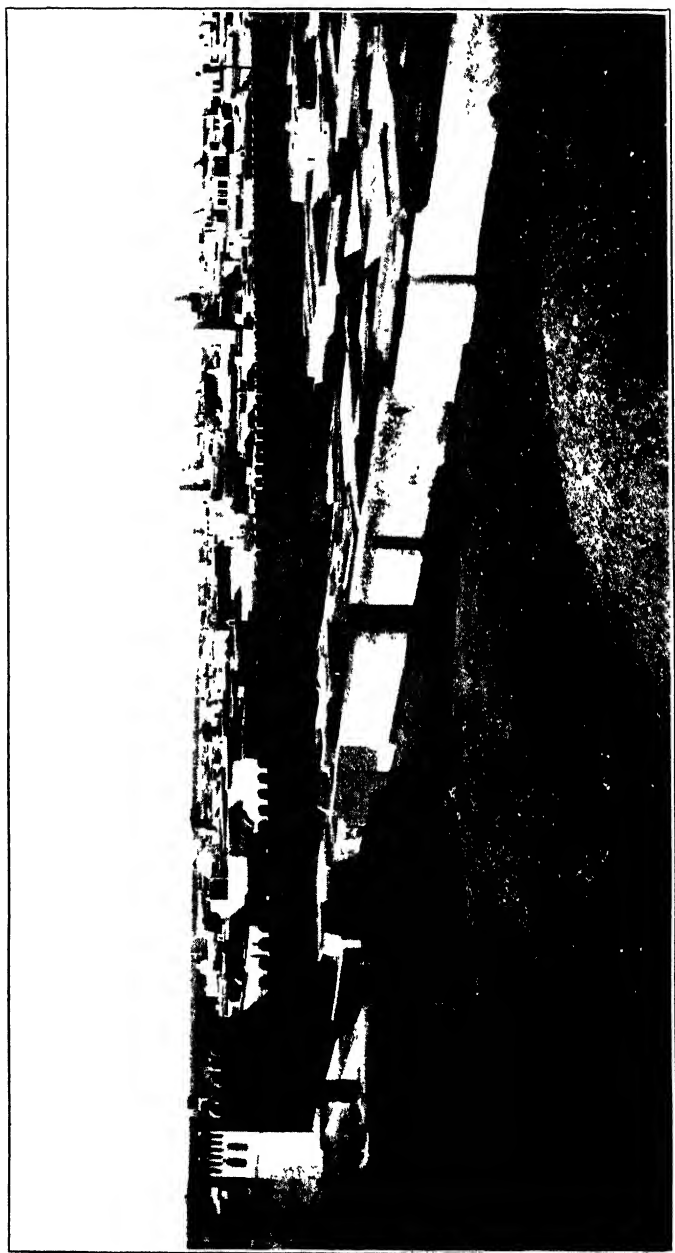
but it is compromised by the fact that only "citizens" are eligible as jurymen. "Subjects" may send their children to the State schools, where they are treated on exactly the same level as the French colonial children; in some districts compulsory education for males is in force. Efforts have been made to adapt the Muslim *medressehs* or secondary schools to modern conditions by introducing chairs of history, geography, French, etc., in combination with the general Muslim theological education given by these institutions. The army as a career is open to "subjects," but not in the same regiments as "citizens"; the latter serve as *Zouaves* (infantry) or *Chasseurs d'Afrique* (cavalry), the former as *Tirailleurs* and *Spahis*. There is also a native camel corps (*Maharistes*) serving in the Sahara zone. A "subject" may become a "citizen" at his own request, by placing himself directly under the laws and customs of France; the difficulty lies in the fact that, as these contain features alien to Muslim law and thought, self-subjection to them is regarded by the stricter members of the Muslim population as apostasy. In consequence very few (about a hundred a year) avail themselves of the opportunity. Many of the higher Muslim dignitaries, however, are distinctly pro-French, and work systematically for a better understanding between the two peoples, even to the extent of alienating themselves to some extent from native favour. As a consequence, the religious power in the country tends to drift away from the *muftis* and *kadis*, the authorised voices of religion, and towards the *marabouts* or local saints, and the religious masonic brotherhoods, both of which are frankly native and anti-European.

It will be seen, then, that the French have succeeded in changing the material face of Algeria in the most brilliant manner. The country is more peaceful and prosperous than it has ever been since the time of the early Arab Empire. Agriculture, commerce and industry all tell the same tale, and the opportunity for advancement and self-development offered to the Algerine of the present day is unquestionably greater than his forefathers have ever enjoyed at any period of the country's history. On the other hand, a century of French rule has but served to show

the complete failure of all attempts to adapt the native population to French civilisation and French ideals. The early hopes of a complete *rapprochement*, the neo-Arab imperialism of the Second Empire, the frankly "practical" and contemptuous policy of the Republic have all failed to break down the barrier between resident European and native, or even to reduce the strong, silent, passive resistance of the latter to European ways of life. The Arabs conquered Algeria, a land of Berbers and other natives with an infinitesimal resident population of Arab colonists, and made it in course of time an Arab country; the French have conquered Algeria, have domiciled nearly a million European colonists in it, and, in a hundred years of occupation, have not made it French. The abounding prosperity of the country reflects credit on French energy and enterprise, but circumstances seem to show that the French have yet a long way to go before they can begin to emulate the success of the Arabs. There are certain things that cannot be bought, even by material prosperity.¹

Although so closely allied to her neighbour in geographical and racial features, the modern Tunisia (once the heart of the Arab province of Ifrikiyah), has enjoyed an entirely independent political history. More central in position, she has usually tended to play a larger part in affairs than the rest of North Africa, Egypt always excepted; the land of ancient Carthage, she formed the famous Roman province of Africa, and contained the capitals of the later Arab Ifrikiyah, first Kairawan and then the Fatimid Mahdiah. Under the Hafsids, it will be remembered, the new capital of Tunis came into prominence, and this remained the head of the Ottoman province after the capture of the country by Sultan Selim II in 1572. The province was always administered by the Turks independently of Algeria, being ruled by a pasha appointed from Constantinople. Very soon, however, as in the neighbouring province, the Janissaries began to make their power felt, and a military revolution transferred the supreme power to

¹ For the French in Algeria, see: Rousset, "La Conquête d'Alger," Paris, 1899, and other works; Baudicour, "La Colonisation d'Algérie," Paris, 1856; Ferry, "Le gouvernement de l'Algérie," Paris, 1891.



Kairawan, the old Arab Capital, to-day.

Deys elected by them. From about 1600 onwards the Deys were faced with new rivals in the Beys who collected the taxes and had charge of the bedouin tribes. For a century an uneasy balance was struck between Deys and Beys until 1702, when the last of the Deys managed to exterminate the Beys and absorb their functions in his own office. On his death shortly afterwards, however, the soldiery proclaimed a new ruler of their own choosing, a Cretan immigrant named Hassan bin Ali, who took the title of Bey. This new dynasty of Beys has continued down to the present day.¹

Like Algeria, Tunisia first came within the ken of modern Europe through the piratical activities of its subjects. One of its ports was bombarded by Admiral Blake in 1656 and other spasmodic efforts were made to check the traffic. But piracy soon became too valuable financially to Tunis for its rulers to countenance its total extermination. In 1819, however, a note from the Powers assembled at Aix-la-Chapelle led the Bey to issue an edict finally abolishing it. The result, strange to say, was most unfortunate. The rigid administration and economic system of the country could not adapt itself to so sudden a change, and Tunis, like Egypt (though for an entirely different reason), paid for her passage along the road of modern civilisation and enlightenment by an ever-increasing financial embarrassment. Finally the Bey, finding the yearly charge on the public debt alone to exceed the total revenue, appealed for help to the British agent, Sir Richard Wood, under whose active leadership British interest in the country became paramount, and a British protectorate was even suggested. But in 1878 Lord Salisbury agreed to recognise French ambitions (directed from Algeria), in return for French acquiescence in the British lease of Cyprus from the Turks. Meanwhile, Tunis had become bankrupt, and the Bey had had to submit to a joint international control of the country's finances, the leading Powers being represented by Britain, France and Italy. The growing interest of the

¹ For this period see especially: description of Africa by Leo Africanus in Purchas' Pilgrims; Dr. Shaw's "Travels," London, 1757; Broadley, "Tunis, Past and Present," Edin. 1882; Rousseau, "Annales tunisiennes," Algiers, 1864.

latter in the country frightened the French, who in 1881 made use of a small attack on Algerian outposts by a Tunisian bedouin tribe as a pretext to cross the frontier, surround the city of Tunis and compel the Bey to accept their terms. Protests by Italy and Turkey (still the legal owner of the country) were ignored, and the signature of the Bey to the Treaty of La Marsa in the summer of 1883 confirmed the French protectorate.

Though the prosperity of Tunisia under French administration has been notably increased, the country forms in many ways a less characteristically French dependency than Algeria. Politically, it is much more independent, and the French position is secured rather by "influence" than by the direct methods of colonial administration practised in the sister province. Tunisia, in fact, resembles Egypt and Morocco in her system of government, rather than Algeria. Nominally the Bey still remains the head of the Regency, supported for legislative purposes by a body, originally called the Consulting Conference and later the General Council, consisting partly of French and partly of native representatives. The latter are nominated and not elected. The administration of the country is controlled in practice by the French Resident-General, and is thus entirely autocratic and dependent on the will of the French Republic. There are, however, considerable checks on the exercise of that will; there is a large and influential non-French European population, and also a flourishing native nationalist organisation which has several times given trouble. The French in the country are outnumbered by the Italians, and there are large numbers of resident British subjects (chiefly Maltese). The native party keep up a strong and persistent demand for a more representative form of government, but the French, except in the matter of municipal councils and other purely local bodies, have done little so far to meet it.¹

When we pass out of Tunisia eastwards into Tripoli, we enter the only part of Ifrikiyah to remain unreviewed, for

¹ For Tunisia under the French, see: Loth, "*La Tunisie et l'œuvre du protectorat français*," Paris, 1907; Johnston, "*Colonization of Africa*," Camb., 1905.

the other frontier of Tripoli (if Cyrenaica be included in it) rests on Egypt. Unlike Algeria and Tunis, the history of Tripoli has been sterile in great events, due largely to the fact that the country consists mainly of desert. The two halves of the province, Tripoli proper and Cyrenaica, are divided geographically by desert ground, and had different origins, Cyrenaica being a Greek colony and Tripoli a Phœnician. All traces of these differences had disappeared, of course, long before the coming of the Arabs. Under the latter, they formed the insignificant eastern portion of Ifrikiyah, playing the part of a high road between Egypt and the Tunisian cities. It was only in 1321 that they secured independence from Tunis, after which a local Tripolitan dynasty (the Beni Ammar) held sway except for a short interval of control by another local family, the Beni Mekki (1354-69). In 1401 the Tunisians came back, and a century later Tripoli was conquered by Spain. The province was given by the Spaniards to the Knights of St. John (1528), who were driven out by the Turks a quarter of a century later. The Turkish hold soon weakened, and Tripoli, following the lead of her neighbours, became a pirate State governed by a local dynasty of Pashas, and owning only nominal allegiance to the Sultan-Caliph. The most interesting episode in its career was afforded by the two wars with the United States, in which it became involved early in the nineteenth century owing to its destructive raids on American commerce. In the first war the Americans lost the frigate "Philadelphia." The end of the local dynasty came in 1835, when a civil war brought back direct Turkish control. Later in the century the political importance of Tripoli increased again, for with the occupation of Egypt by the British and Tunis by the French it became the only part of North Africa remaining in Turkish hands. By 1900 it had become an open secret that it was much coveted by another European power. Although she had large colonies of her own blood in all the North African countries from Egypt to Morocco—ranging in some cases to more than fifty per cent. of the whole European population—Italy had so far been unsuccessful in obtaining for herself a footing on the African mainland.

Egypt or Algeria she had never sought ; in Tunisia she had been forestalled by the French. In 1902 her "special position" in Tripoli was recognised by France in a secret agreement, communicated to, and approved by, Great Britain. The action of Germany four years later in provoking the Agadir crisis in Morocco frightened her ; the rather indefinite treaties she held with Germany and Austria under the Triple Alliance did not cover North Africa, and she felt she might soon be forestalled again by a far more active rival than France, particularly as German influence at the court of the Turkish Sultan-Caliph seemed visibly on the increase. In 1911 the tension which had been growing for some time between Italy and Turkey (who, foreseeing Italy's intentions, had been quietly increasing her garrison and encouraging local Muslim hatred of the resident Italian colony) came to a head in an ultimatum from Italy peremptorily demanding the Porte's consent to her military occupation of Tripoli and Cyrenaica. As no answer had been received in the twenty-four hours offered by the ultimatum, war was declared on September 29th. Turkey was ill prepared for the war, and so—as events proved—was Italy. In November the Italians occupied Tripoli town, and a Royal decree was issued in Rome placing the *vilayets* under the sovereignty of Italy. The Turks, however, showed unexpected energy in rallying the local Arabs, and had their hands not been tied in other directions, they might have succeeded in manœuvring the Italians out of the country. But the Balkan troubles made it imperative for Turkey to end the Tripoli *impasse*, and Italy on her side, having failed to conquer the colony, was ready to accept any agreement which would save her honour. The formal treaty of peace laid it down that the *vilayets* should be evacuated by the Ottoman military forces, but said nothing of Italian annexation. It left the Italians free, however, to take what measures they wished, and in spite of strong local opposition led by a Berber shaikh Sulaiman al-Bairuni, who had been one of the members for Tripoli in the Turkish parliament, they had by the middle of 1914 succeeded in occupying and pacifying most of the country. The Great War brought its own problems to Italy, and the

local Arabs and Berbers saw their chance and took it. By 1915 the Italians had been driven out of every district but Tripoli town and a few other coastal points, and the country was in the hands of a pro-Turkish faction headed by Bairuni, Nouri Bey (the brother-in-law of Enver Pasha), and Jafar Pasha, a Baghdad Arab officer in the Turkish army. Tripoli and Cyrenaica became Turkish military bases, connected by German submarine direct with Constantinople, and as such played an important part in the Great War.

The whole of the old Arab provinces of Ifrikiyah and the Mughrib are thus at the present day under the control of two European powers ; France, controlling Morocco, Algeria and Tunis, that is to say, the whole of the old Mughrib and the best half of Ifrikiyah ; and Italy, controlling Tripoli and Cyrenaica (re-named by her Libya), forming the other and more barren half of Ifrikiyah. The comparative backwardness of all the countries prevents them from contributing much towards the general Arab culture of the day ; while the fact that their present status is (with the exception of Algeria) of very recent date makes it difficult to foresee on what lines their political future may develop. Such nationalistic ideas as there are—and they are fairly prominent in Algeria and Tunis, and have given trouble since the war in Morocco—are based on purely local aims and have no pan-Arab connotation. The bodies of Young Algerians and Young Tunisians and so forth merely seek more representative local government, and are not necessarily antagonistic to the occupying Power as such ; and other activity is confined to the rebellions of local tribal shaikhs, of the type of Abdul Kadir or the post-war Abdul Karim, seeking rather to shake off European domination than to bring into play any considered plan of their own. Whatever the future of these old Arab provinces, they play so little part in the Arab world of to-day as to make them, in any consideration of Arab hopes and political ambitions, practically negligible.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT WAR AND THE ARABS

As we glance through the pages of any book dealing with European political history in the years immediately preceding the world war, it seems difficult to remember that its approach was largely hidden from our eyes, that its arrival caught us, in spite of what seem now many obvious warnings, totally unprepared, individually as well as nationally. Everything that happened in Europe from 1890 onwards seems now, on looking back, to have led directly up to the great outburst, as logically and obviously as the movement of a drama or a musical symphony leads us on towards its climax ; many little events which we saw at the time only as isolated happenings, come into perspective now as part of the train leading up to the inevitable catastrophe. As in Europe, so in the Arab world. The great war produced changes in the Arab countries unequalled in importance since the days of the Ottoman conquest, yet its onset was not foreseen by the public, nor in any way prepared for. And yet, as we look back, we can see that here too a certain set of tendencies were in motion which seemed to be marching to some great conclusion. The general unrest in Turkey which culminated in the "Young Turk" movement and the revolution of 1908 ; the corresponding unrest in the Arab provinces, centring in the secret societies, and fanned by the failure of the Young Turks to live up to the ideals they had propounded ; the increasing domination of Turkey by Germany, and the invasion of the Persian Gulf, for a hundred years a British preserve, by French, German and Russian shipping ; the Baghdad Railway scheme ; the illogical position in Egypt and the constant trouble in Morocco ; the feverish activities of France in Saharan Africa, and the seizure of Tripoli by

Italy ; all seemed to denote a period of change and disintegration, to point towards a climax the immediate issue of which we now know, but the final results of which are still hidden in the womb of the future. It is worthy of note, however, that so far as the Arab world is concerned, the main result of the war and the post-war period has been rather to strengthen existing tendencies, to give a stronger position to quarters already powerful than to reveal anything particularly new or revolutionary. The war certainly caused the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire, but the Empire had been steadily disappearing for a century or more ; it revealed no new Islamic power to take Turkey's place. All it did was to bring out into the open the various European powers which had long been, as all men knew, the actually dominant or controlling influences in the various provinces, and to confer on their Arab ambitions, whether already partially realized or still only dreamt of, public acknowledgment of their position ; it thus gave decent legality to various *faits accomplis* rather than produced actual changes. The war was, in fact, a culmination of tendencies in the Arab political world which had been obvious to the careful observer, whether native or foreign, several decades before it opened. European pressure on the Arab countries had begun as early as 1508, in the efforts of the Portuguese to establish themselves on the coast of Oman ; it had become more open with the invasion of Egypt and Syria by Napoleon (1798), the occupation of Algiers by France (1830), and of Aden by England (1837). Forty years later had followed the French occupation of Tunis (1881) and the English occupation of Egypt (1882) ; then, after another lull, had come the French protectorate over Morocco (1907) and the Italian seizure of Tripoli (1911). Within the still-existing framework of the Ottoman Empire, England had obtained certain extra-territorial privileges at Baghdad (1816), the Powers had created the autonomous *sandjak* of the Lebanon (1860), and Germany had, by her control of the Anatolian and Baghdad Railways, driven a wedge into the heart of northern Syria and Irak.

In the train of events which formed the immediate preparation of the great war, the earliest to be noted in the

Arab world is the renewal of the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria and Italy in 1887, which contained a clause binding the two former to support Italy in her North African ambitions in Tripoli and Morocco. This same obligation was renewed in a new treaty signed four years later. At the same time Italy and Spain reached an agreement on Moroccan policy, and Lord Salisbury, by an interchange of notes with Italy, bound Great Britain to support her in North Africa in return for Italy's support in Egypt. So far, Great Britain, by virtue of her traditional rivalry with France in the Near East, had supported the anti-French policy of Italy and Spain, in spite of the fact that it assured Germany, already a formidable rival, a very strong Continental position ; but in 1897 all this was changed by the spectacular visit of the German Emperor to Damascus, during which he publicly assumed for Germany a new rôle as the special friend and protector of Islam. This could only be regarded in the light of a threat to Great Britain, universally recognized as the greatest modern Muslim power next to Turkey ; and the threat was followed up by an active policy of German propaganda in Constantinople, in Baghdad and the Arab provinces generally. Great Britain reacted to this in two ways ; by striving to reach an understanding with France, also a great Muslim power and an admitted permanent enemy of Germany ; and by increasing her hold on the coast of Arabia by means of agreements with the various local shaikhs and amirs. Occasionally, too, as in her moral support of the new Ibn Sa'ud prince against the Ibn Rashid family, she took a hand in the Arabian politics of the interior. The fruits of the French *rapprochement* were seen in the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904, which gave England a free hand in Egypt in return for her support of French policy in Morocco. This Agreement had far-reaching effects, which can hardly have been foreseen by its negotiators. It caused immediate alarm in Germany, whose Islamic schemes were now faced with two powerful enemies, against which there could only be marshalled, in the Mediterranean, Italy and Turkey ; both unreliable owing to mutual distrust of each other's aims and traditional existing friendships for England. Hence the Algeciras

crisis, in which Germany compelled France to make Morocco an international question. France, owing to British support, was able to stand her ground, but the importance of the affair did not end there ; for the very fact that Germany had been able to bring such obvious pressure to bear on France frightened British public opinion, and it is more than probable that the secret British decision to support France in the event of a war was made at this time. Any tendency in this direction was certainly helped by the second Moroccan crisis—the Agadir incident of 1911—which arose through a French attempt to march into the interior of the country without consulting the Powers. Germany immediately retaliated by sending a vessel of war to Morocco, and so charged with electricity was the air of Europe at this time that the action came within an ace of provoking the opening of the world war. In the end France, again with British support, was able to persuade Germany to leave Morocco alone, in return for “ compensation ” elsewhere. Meanwhile, at the other end of the Arab world, Germany’s activity in connection with the Baghdad Railway project was causing England great anxiety in Irak and the Persian Gulf ; anxiety which was publicly reflected in the famous declaration of Lord Lansdowne in the House of Lords in 1903 that “ we should regard the establishment of a naval base or a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it by all the means at our disposal.” In this sphere the French *entente* was of little use to Britain ; there was a lack of unanimity in the joint opposition to the Baghdad Railway scheme, in which, in the end, French financial interests agreed to collaborate with the Germans, and there were moments of strain in Gulf affairs, particularly in 1912, owing to French annoyance at the joint efforts of Britain and the Sultan of Muscat to suppress the arms traffic. Russian rivalry, which at one time threatened British interests, was removed by the Anglo-Russian *entente*, which split Persia into “ spheres of influence ” and excluded the Persian Gulf from Russian pressure (1907). The local victories of the Arab alliance of the Shaikh of Koweit, the young Ibn Sa’ud, and the Muntafik tribe of

Irak against the pro-Turkish Ibn Rashid family materially helped Britain to overcome the German menace in the Gulf ; and finally, in the years 1912-14, the whole position as between the British, the Germans and the Turks was in process of being cleared up by mutual agreement, destined only to be frustrated by the opening of the great war.

Thus the situation in the Arab world in 1914 was roughly as follows ; Irak, Syria (including Palestine), the Hijaz, Asir and Yemen were nominally Ottoman provinces, honeycombed by privileges and special arrangements in favour of local Arab or foreign powers ; Aden was a British possession, and Great Britain was in direct treaty relationship with the various chiefs of the Hadramawt, the Sultan of Muscat, the Shaikh of Bahrein, the chiefs of the Trucial Oman and the Shaikh of Koweit ; Hasa and the neighbouring Katar were in the effective occupation of the new Wahabi government established by the young Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, who also held a strong position in the interior of the Najd, and was in indefinite but friendly relations with Great Britain ; northern Najd was under the control of the Ibn Rashid amirs of the Shammar, who were pro-Turks but were weaker in the field than Ibn Sa'ud and had been recently seriously weakened in the north by the activities of Shaikh Nouri Shalan of the Anaza ; and, lastly, Egypt was still nominally a Turkish province, but administered and to all intents and purposes controlled by Great Britain.¹

The outbreak of the war did not immediately alter the situation, except in the far west ; Algeria, Tunis and Morocco as French dependencies were naturally affected by the declaration of war by Germany on France on August 3rd. The adhesion of Great Britain to France and Belgium led to immediate military activity in Aden and, to a lesser degree,

¹ For Arabia at the outbreak of war, see C. S. Hurgronje, "The Holy War made in Germany," London, 1915 ; G. Wyman Bury, "Pan-Islam," London, 1919 ; H. St. J. Philby, "The Heart of Arabia," London, 1922 ; A. J. B. Wavell, "A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca," London, 1918 ; Official "Handbook of Arabia," London, 1917. For Mesopotamia : E. B. Soane, "To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise," London, 1912 ; G. E. Hubbard, "From the Gulf to Ararat," London, 1916 ; for Syria : Gertrude Bell, "Syria," London, 1919 ; Nadra Mutran, "La Syrie de demain," Paris, 1916. For Egypt : Sidney Low, "Egypt in Transition," London, 1914 ; W. L. Balls, "Egypt of the Egyptians," London, 1915 ; S. A. Leeder, "Modern Sons of the Pharaohs," London, 1918.

in Egypt, but otherwise the Arab countries remained quiet for two months. The declaration of war by Russia on Turkey (October 31st) was the bursting of the storm; it was immediately followed by those of France and England (November 1st). The whole Arab world except Tripoli and the independent states of Arabia proper was now automatically involved. In Egypt the results were immediately apparent; martial law was proclaimed the next day, and on December 17th there followed the official termination of the Ottoman suzerainty which had lasted since 1517, and the placing of the country "under the protection of His Majesty." Further proclamations announced that Britain would not call upon the Egyptian people for aid (a somewhat empty assurance in view of what happened later); and that the reigning Khedive, Abbas Hilmi, who was in Constantinople when the war broke out, would be deposed in favour of his uncle, Hosein Kamal, a son of the Khedive Ismail. The title of khedive was henceforth to be replaced by that of sultan, and the chief British representative was to become a high commissioner; he would automatically assume control of Egyptian foreign affairs. These changes were accepted by the people "without disturbance if without enthusiasm," and were immediately officially recognized by the French, whose counterblast was a declaration of Morocco as a French protectorate. This was in turn officially recognized by Great Britain.

Meanwhile hostilities in the Arab world were opened by the British with the occupation of Basrah (November 21st), and Qurnah (December 9th). For the moment, though, almost the most important effect of the war was the alteration in status of the Suez Canal, which, though still primarily a French commercial concern, was now to form, for some three years, the eastern boundary of the British Empire in Arab lands. As a vital link in British eastern communications, the canal seemed an obvious target for enemy attack, particularly as its capture offered to the Turks the second strong inducement of the recapture of a lost province. The first attack made on it, as well as the defence provided were both on rather primitive lines, due to the immense difficul-

ties of transporting large bodies of troops across the railless and waterless Sinai desert, which in turn served to make the British authorities inclined to underestimate the possible danger. The Turks finally attacked with a force of some 10,000, and, owing to the fact that the defence was arranged on the western bank of the canal, actually got across it at some points. They were finally driven back, but allowed to withdraw across the desert with impunity, a pursuit being considered impracticable. No further attack was made for some time, both sides being absorbed in other pursuits. In the spring of 1915 began the Gallipoli campaign, which turned Egypt into a vast base camp. The presence of the troops, together with the rapidly increasing price of cotton, helped to tide the country over the severe economic crisis which had threatened in the first winter of the war. And in the autumn of 1915 came the attack on the western flank of Egypt by the Senussi, to whom reference must now be made.

The weakness of the inhabitants of North Africa for secret societies has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout the Islamic period. It was in North Africa, it will be remembered, that the Fatimids rose to power ; and it has been again in North Africa that, in modern times, the sect of the Senussi has achieved such a remarkable political position. Like the Wahabis, from whom in a sense they sprang, the Senussis represent a genuine modern Arab effort to reform the life of Islam and reinfuse it with something of the old fire and vision. Like the Wahabis, too, they belong intellectually to the Arab reform movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The founder of the order, Sayid Muhammad bin Ali as-Senussi, was born about 1796 in Algeria, of the Arab tribe of Walad Sidi Abdullah (actually a mixed tribe of Arab and Berber antecedents). The title " Sayid " shows that the family claimed direct descent from the Prophet, through the line of the martyr Hosein. As a young man Sayid Muhammad studied theology at Fez, and seems quite early in life to have essayed the rôle of reformer, for before he was thirty we find him travelling in the Sahara as an itinerant missionary, preaching a reformed Islam. Eventually he reached Cairo, where he came into violent conflict with the *ulema* of

the Al-Azhar mosque-university. This apparently decided him to leave Egypt, and he went on to Mecca, where he became very intimate with the head of a Moroccan religious fraternity known as the Kadiris ; he also visited the Wahabis in the Najd, and thereafter his own teachings became strongly infused with Wahabi doctrine. The orthodox *ulema* of Mecca, however, proved as intractable as those of Cairo, and eventually Sayid Muhammad settled in Cyrenaica, where he built himself a monastery from which to direct his growing influence among the Kadiris (who were to be found all over North Africa), and over the Sudanese country of Wadai, whose sultan had come under his sway at Mecca. He had still, however, to meet with opposition from the orthodox ; this time from the Turks, who had heard enough of his growing influence to resent it. He accordingly decided to move again, to the Saharan oasis of Jarabub, which was out of range of the Ottoman arm. Here he died in 1860, leaving the Senussi succession to his younger son, Mahdi, under whom the fraternity developed amazingly. Soon devotees were to be found in almost every Islamic city, and even (an unusual thing for this type of religious fraternity) among the upper classes of society. But it was by its political influence in both Tripoli and the Sudan that the order became known to Europe. The Senussi, for instance, played a considerable part in opposition to the Sudanese "Mahdi" and his successor the Khalifa, for it was their refusal to countenance these upstarts which was eventually responsible for their downfall. Turkey finally conferred official recognition on the order, by an official visit in 1889 to Jarabub of the Pasha of Benghazi. Ottoman favour was, however, notoriously dangerous, and the Senussi leader soon afterwards found an opportunity of moving his headquarters farther into the Sahara desert, to Jof in the oases of Kufra. For the next two decades the Senussi were largely engaged in organizing opposition to the French penetration of the Sudan and central Africa, which threatened their hold over Wadai ; their plans were brought to naught, however, by the lack of cohesion of the negro tribes. In 1902 Mahdi died and was succeeded by his nephew, Ahmad.

Covert enmity to European influence, especially French and Italian, continued to be the keynote of Senussi policy, and the order played a large though undefined part in the opposition of the natives to the Tripoli penetration. When, on the entry of Italy into the great war, Tripoli became practically a Turkish base, pressure was immediately brought to bear on the Senussi to join in an attack on both Egypt and the Sudan. The Senussi were not in general antipathetic to the British or to the Egyptian administration ; their creed leads them to admire law, order and material development, and in addition their economic position as desert traders laid on them the obligation to keep on good terms with the Egyptian wholesalers. Unfortunately the combination of German gold and munitions, and the entry of Italy, a traditional enemy, into the war on the Allied side, was too much for them. A gallant effort to keep the peace was made by the Senussi representative in Egypt, Muhammad al-Idris, and at the last moment the British authorities placed considerable sums of treasure and munitions at his disposal ; but the Germans and Turks, in touch with Cyrenaica by fast submarines, were prepared to go one higher, and by November, 1915, the Senussi attitude was decided.

Thus a most serious situation was created for the British in Egypt, though in the event the danger proved far less than had been feared. Acting from the oases of the central Sahara, the Senussi formed in theory the last link in a long chain of enemy communication leading from Berlin through the Balkans to Constantinople, thence by submarine and on through Kufra to the heart of Africa. There were endless possibilities of mischief to a daring and resourceful enemy. Luckily for both Britain and France, the Germans in this direction used less than their usual acumen, and the net result of the Senussi intervention was a badly-conducted campaign against Western Egypt and a half-hearted effort to help Ali Dinar of Darfur, a Sudanese shaikh who had rebelled against the British.

At the outset the Egyptian authorities withdrew their western outposts from Sollum and other isolated points, and the Senussi promptly advanced to Dabya, the western terminus of the Egyptian State Railways, some ninety

miles from Alexandria. The small port of Matruh, lying west of Dabya, they made no attempt to occupy, and it was decided to use this as a base of British operations. The British forces consisted of Territorials, Australians, Indians and Egyptians, having attached to them also a fleet of armoured cars which played a big part in the struggle ; the Senussi forces were made up mostly of Arab and Berber tribesmen, with a sprinkling of Turks. They were led by the Baghdadi Arab, Jafar Pasha al-Askari (later to be the first Minister of Defence of Irak, the most prominent of the post-war Anglo-Arab States), who had with him Sidi Ahmad, the head of the Senussi order, and Nouri Bey, the Turk. Indecisive actions took place in December, and in January, 1916, the British force was augmented by a detachment of South Africans. Soon after the armies met, and the Senussis were heavily defeated ; in February they were again defeated, and Jafar Pasha was captured ; and in March they retreated into Cyrenaica, Sollum being again occupied by the British. The occasion was marked by a dash across the desert of an armoured car squadron under the command of the Duke of Westminster, for the purpose of rescuing a party of British sailors in Senussi hands.¹ In the meanwhile a second attack in the south had been organized by Sidi Ahmad, who occupied several of the oases in the Nile valley from which Egyptian outposts had been withdrawn. In October, 1916, however, he was driven out of the Dakhla oasis without difficulty ; a British attempt to reconnoitre the Kufra oasis by automobile failed. In February, 1917, a direct raid was made on Siwa in force, the result being indecisive, as the Senussi retired from the oasis but were not overcome. Sidi Ahmad now took up residence in Jarabub (one of the Kufra oases), and here no military effort was made to dislodge him ; but the increasingly good understanding between a section of his followers and England and Italy, and the failure of Germany and Turkey to do anything much to help him, finally accomplished his fall. In 1918 his cousin, Muhammad Idris (who had previously represented the order in Egypt and had always worked for an understanding with the British), was elected

¹ See Gwatkin-Williams, "Prisoners of the Red Desert," London.

head of the order, and Ahmad retired in dudgeon to Constantinople.

In the meanwhile the war had made other calls on Egypt. The breakdown of the Gallipoli campaign had resulted in the return of large bodies of troops for rest and reorganization; and there were serious fears of renewed Turkish attacks on the canal. In 1916 the front line of defence on this flank was shifted forward ten miles into the desert, and an elaborate system of trenches laid out. The difficulty, and above all the expense, of garrisoning this desolate post soon led, however, to a consideration of an entirely new project; no less than turning the tables on the Turks by playing their own game of crossing the Sinai desert and commencing an offensive in Palestine. This operation was, however, closely connected with events in other parts of the Arab world, to which some allusion must now be made.

The British occupation of Basrah and lower Irak late in 1914, had had an immediate effect on the local political situation. It will be remembered that the new Wahabi leader, Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, had come to an agreement with the British before the war, and had accepted a British accredited representative, Captain Shakespear, at his court. The British capture of Basrah led to a closer alliance. Ibn Sa'ud visited Basrah in person and agreed to negotiate with outside powers only through Great Britain, who in return guaranteed him the full possession of the territories now in his occupation. His great Shammar rival, Ibn Rashid, had in the meanwhile strengthened his ties with the Turks, and set himself to help them by all the means in his power. Many of the camels used by the Turks in their first offensive across the Sinai desert had been obtained through his good offices. His power was, however, diminishing; an attempt to drive the rebel shaikh Nouri ash-Shalan from the oasis of Jauf late in 1914 was defeated, and the next year saw a more serious reverse, when his attempt to impose his authority over the oases of Aneiza and Boreida (on the borders of Koweit) was frustrated, this time by Ibn Sa'ud, who henceforth claimed the oases. In the battle Captain Shakespear was unfortunately killed, and his untimely death had a most important effect on British policy in Arabia, for it removed

the only direct link between Great Britain and the greatest Arab of his day. The unfortunate misunderstanding which began to arise between Britain and Ibn Sa'ud, and which has gone on more or less to the present day, can be dated from the disappearance of Captain Shakespear from the scene. British attention was now to be focused on another part of Arabia; the star of the Hijaz was in the ascendant, and the Wahabi leader, old friend and ally as he was, began to take second place in British eyes to the Amir of Mecca.

There were several reasons for the sudden importance of the Hijaz to British politicians. The failure of the Gallipoli campaign and the disappointing progress in Irak made it desirable to cover the lowered British prestige by a bold stroke in another direction. The decision to push forward the "Egyptian front" across the Sinai desert made the west of Arabia appear more important for the time being than the east; and the prestige of the Amir of Mecca seemed in itself a political factor worth more to the Allied cause than the friendship of the more obscure Wahabi leader. This point of view, it may be noted, was not shared by the British-Indian school, which had long been in touch with Ibn Sa'ud and knew his worth; but India was at the moment out of favour, and Britain was relying for the conduct of her Arab affairs on the Egyptian school of "new men" centred in the Arab Bureau at Cairo. As the war went on, the antagonism between the two British schools of Arab thought developed correspondingly, Cairo ranging itself behind the Sharifian family of the Amir of Mecca, and British India remaining faithful to Ibn Sa'ud. This unfortunate division of opinion left a permanent mark on British policy, and strongly affected the course of Arabian affairs. The Sharifian side won all along the line, chiefly through the good fortune of having thrown up two outstanding personalities who made a particular appeal to the British public; Col. T. E. Lawrence and Miss Gertrude Bell. In addition, they possessed in the charming personality of the Amir (later King) Faisal, the third son of the Amir of Mecca, an asset of which the fullest use was made. They were thus in a position to capture the imagination of the British public by "showy" tactics which their competitors in India could not pretend

to emulate. Whether the British Government was wise in committing its Arab policy wholly to the hands of Cairo, it is still too early to judge ; but it must be noted that the weight of post-war events has come down wholly on the side of the Indian school. Their old favourite "spot," Ibn Sa'ud, is now the acknowledged greatest Arab ruler of the day, controlling not only the original Wahabi territories, but those of the Amir of Mecca as well, and he enjoys the further merit of having built up his empire by his own exertions, and without the aid of any "friendly Power." The Sharifians, on the other hand, have lost everything but Irak ; which they hold only by virtue of British support and assistance. The British Government may realize now that there was something to be said for the Indian point of view, after all.

One Arab factor had probably a good deal to do with the final British commitment to the Sharifians ; this was the inability of Ibn Sa'ud himself to do more to help the British in the Mesopotamian advance of 1915. The British position in Irak throughout this year was such as to give grave anxiety to those in charge. It having been decided that the mere occupation of Basrah and Qurnah was insufficient for the political objects in view (which at that time centred round the necessity of protecting the pipe-line of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, several times threatened by Turkish raids), an advance was ordered, Amara on the Tigris being occupied on June 3rd, and Nasriyah on the Euphrates (a Muntafik town), on July 25th. The British force was now well astride both rivers. But the authorities both in Simla and London were pressing for a further advance, and eventually the military leaders on the spot agreed to the attempt, against their own better judgment. The British-Indian forces were adequate for the task they had performed, but were by no means large enough for a general advance over country of the most difficult order, in which transport, of which there was already some deficiency, was bound to play a big part. The result was almost inevitable. In August General Townshend commenced his advance up the Tigris (the Euphrates, owing to the uncertain nature of the terrain and probable hostility of the Shiah tribes, being left out of the

operations), and on September 28th defeated the Turks at as-Sinn, shortly afterwards occupying Kut. These successes led to a demand from home for a further advance which, in spite of the fact that no reinforcements could be promised, was duly undertaken. The end came at Ctesiphon (November 22nd), where the British failed to dislodge the Turks from their position, and were soon in full retreat. On December 3rd they reached Kut again, and a week later the town was invested by the Turks. For nearly five months the siege proceeded, desperate efforts being made from Basrah and Qurnah to relieve the garrison. The efforts, which cost nearly 25,000 casualties, were unavailing, and on April 29th, General Townshend surrendered with 9,000 men.

This reverse, coming on the top of the Gallipoli failure, was a serious blow to British prestige, and finally decided the home authorities to fall in with a scheme which had been simmering for some time in the Arab Bureau in Cairo. This was no less than to prevail upon the Amir of Mecca to declare his independence of Turkey, join the Allied cause, and place himself at the head of the Arab nationalist movement.

Hosein bin Ali had, as we have seen, been growing lukewarm in his support of the Turks, and more inclined to align himself with Arab nationalistic ideas for some years before the war. His support of the Beni Harb in their agitation against the extension of the Hijaz Railway to Mecca showed which way the wind was blowing ; though probably in this case his main immediate object was to prevent the increase of Turkish influence in Mecca itself which the new railway must bring. But in 1915 the tension between Arabs and Turks in Syria had become acute, and events in that country were doubtless not without their effect on the Amir. His son, Faisal had been appointed to the staff of Jamal Pasha, the Turkish war-time Governor of Syria, who on arrival discovered among the papers of the French consulate documents incriminating members of leading Arab families in nationalist and anti-Turkish plans. Taking advantage of war conditions and martial law, Jamal commenced an organized attack on the Arab movement, on the same lines, though necessarily less general in application, to that in-

augurated by his colleagues Enver and Talaat on the Armenians. Many Arab notables were seized, tried and in some cases executed in a peculiarly barbarous manner, their bodies being hung on gibbets in the great square which forms the tramway centre of Damascus.¹ Faisal, at considerable personal risk, utilized his position as a staff officer and a son of the Amir of Mecca to protest against this policy and to shield the unfortunate victims, but in vain ; and finally, receiving private warning of danger against his person, he fled from Syria and made his way to his father in Mecca. The latter had been strenuously engaged since the outbreak of war in improving and strengthening his local political position. He was in negotiation again with both the Idrisi in Asir and the Imam of Sana in the Yemen, he was interfering wherever possible in all local tribal disputes ; and he had dispatched his second son, Abdullah, to the Najd, to act as peace negotiator between Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashid. In the summer of 1915 it became known to the British authorities in Cairo that Hosein was seriously considering actual revolt ; and London, on receipt of the intelligence, at once decided to act upon it. The Arab Bureau in Cairo became a special "department" with almost independent powers ; direct contact was established with Hosein, and Arab prisoners who might be useful, like Jafar Pasha, captured in the Senussi campaign, were granted parole and other privileges. Finally, in the summer of 1916, Hosein proclaimed the independence of the Hijaz (June 5th) and issued a proclamation to the Muslim world justifying himself in rebelling against the un-Islamic regime of the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress. During the autumn the Turkish garrisons were driven out of Taif and Jiddah (the latter with the help of a British naval detachment), and Hosein was saluted at a congress of shaikhs in Mecca as "Sultan of the Arabs." The title gave immediate offence to other independent Arab chiefs, especially to Ibn Sa'ud, and British pressure was brought to bear on Hosein to modify it in favour of the more definite style of "King of

¹ The same public punishment "pour encourager les autres" was adopted by the French in Damascus during the rebellion of 1925. The Damascenes will hardly be blamed if they fail altogether to realize the superiority of "European civilization" over the Turkish variety.

the Hijaz," in which capacity he was recognized by the Allied Governments. The Sharifian forces soon afterwards captured Wajh and Yambo, the port of Medina; the latter town, however, was strenuously defended by the Turk, Fakhri Pasha, who continued to hold it (partly owing to the unwillingness of the Arabs to bombard it) until after the Armistice. A British Hijaz force was organised to help Hosein, in which the moving spirit was Colonel Lawrence, who acted at first as liaison officer to Faisal. There followed a brilliant collaboration which shook the Turkish hold on Arabia—for Lawrence's agents and Lawrence himself were to be found far behind the Turkish lines, and even as far north as Aleppo—kept the Syrian tribes in a continual ferment, and laid the foundation for the British attack of 1918 which ended Ottoman control in Syria. The day of Hosein's declaration of independence was consecrated by the Arab nationalists as the *Yom al-Nahdah* or "Day of the Renaissance"; and indeed the event, though disappointing in its after results, actually did mark an epoch in Arab history, for Hosein was the first Arab ruler to be recognised by the world as of kingly rank since the days of the Caliphate.

In the same year, however, a secret agreement had been concluded between the British and French Governments which laid down in the event of victory certain dispositions of the Arab countries which were revealed neither to Hosein, the British officers who were in negotiation with him, or the British public. This agreement, known as the Sykes-Picot from the names of the two plenipotentiaries, was in effect an elaboration of a three-fold "understanding," which had been effected earlier as between France, Great Britain and Russia. It gave France a free hand on the Syrian coast, including the Lebanon, and what amounted to a protectorate over the interior, since any State which the Arabs of the interior might set up would be compelled to employ only French advisers. Irak came similarly under British protection, and the case of Palestine was more or less reserved. But the British negotiators with Hosein had committed themselves to work for the independence of the Arabs, subject to further negotiations regarding Palestine and the Syrian coast; not a hint was given of any pending negotia-

tions with the French, for the very good reason that the British plenipotentiaries had been kept in the dark on the matter by their own Government. Next year was to follow a further shock to Arab hopes, in the form of the so-called "Balfour Declaration," which expressed the favour of the British Government towards a National Home for the Jews in Palestine. Neither the Sykes-Picot Agreement nor the Balfour Declaration actually infringed on the promises made to Hosein as the spokesman of Arab nationalism, and thus the often-expressed view that they convicted the British Government of dishonesty is unjust and untrue ; but they did act as a very definite shock to Arab hopes. Hosein had, after all, been definitely invited to rebel by the British, and the friendship of the latter for the various small Arab potentates along the fringe of the Persian Gulf had been well known to the Arab nation for years. It was not surprising that the Arabs should be inclined to trust themselves to the great British Government without troubling to haggle too much over details, but basing their trust on the assurance of British officers with whom they were in direct touch that the independence of the Arabs had become a part of British policy. Quite naturally, the sudden introduction by these same British into Arab lands of the French and the Jews—immigrants who could hardly be expected to show much enthusiasm for the Arab cause—was, to say the least, a little disappointing. The British had offered support for Arab hopes with one hand, and had removed that support with the other ; they had encouraged the Arabs to fight for independence, and then deliberately imported two new enemies. No wonder the Arab estimate of British trustworthiness has descended since the world war !

During 1916 considerable progress was made in securing the safety of Egypt on both its vulnerable flanks. A new railway and water pipe-line was built from Kantara, on the Canal, to the Sinai oasis of Qatiya. A Turkish attack made on the oasis in August was repulsed, and the British slowly advanced to Bir al-Mazar and Al-Arish. The capture of Magdhaba a few days later, of Rafah in January, 1917, and of Aqaba (by the Sharifian forces) later in the year cleared the whole Sinai peninsula of Turkish troops, and finally

secured the safety of the Canal. There followed, on March 26th, the unsuccessful raid of the British on Gaza (a cleverly conceived operation which came within an ace of success), and the more deliberate attack of April 17th, also unsuccessful. The Gaza front now took on itself something of the aspect of the trench warfare in France, and for a time the only activity in this part of the world was due to the efforts of Lawrence and his Sharifian allies to paralyse the Hijaz Railway by train-wrecking and political activity among the tribes lying behind the Turkish lines. The disappearance of the Senussi danger on the western flank of Egypt practically completed the release of that country from the possibility of actual invasion.

Similar success was now attending the British forces in Irak, where the direction of affairs had been taken over from Simla by London, and a very careful re-organisation of communications had been carried out by the new commander-in-chief, General Maude. By the middle of February, 1917, the British had again pushed up the Tigris beyond Kut, thus wiping out the reverse of the year before, and by the end of the month had reached Aziziyah, half way between Kut and Baghdad. On March 11th, Baghdad itself was occupied, and the now disorganised Turkish forces were cleverly split into two separate bodies and driven north-west and north-east. When the heat of the Mesopotamian summer intervened to stop the operations, the whole of Irak except the Mosul *vilayet* was in British hands.

The stage was now set for the final act, in which the Syrian and Mesopotamian fronts became virtually one, and the whole of northern Arabia was involved. The stakes on both sides were big; Turkey sought the re-capture of Baghdad and Mecca in order to rehabilitate her position in Islam; Germany was thinking of her Baghdad Railway; the British hoped to give the Turks a knock-out blow, and to free the Persian Gulf from the German bogey; the Arabs saw in an Allied victory a fairer chance of national regeneration and freedom than they had had since the fall of the Ummeyyads. The German-Turkish plan was to hold the British in Palestine, and strike at the Mesopotamian front.

For this purpose the *Yilderim* or "Lightning" army was organised during the summer, under the command, first of General von Falkenhayn, and later of General Liman von Sanders Pasha, with its base at Aleppo, the junction of the Baghdad Railway with the Syrian system. The British aimed at relieving pressure on Mesopotamia by striking upwards through Palestine. In July, 1917, the Sinai force came under the command of General Allenby, and intensive preparations were begun to anticipate the Turks by a rapid advance. The Turks were hampered by the bad condition of the single line from Haidar Pasha (Constantinople) to Aleppo on which they depended for their communications, and they did little to improve it. The British doubled the line from Kantara to the Palestine front and laid down new railways in Irak, thus ensuring the communications of both fronts. In the early autumn, the German-Turkish high command, realising the danger to themselves of a possible British occupation of Palestine, changed their plans and determined to strike first on this front. The alteration came too late. It helped to relieve the British in Irak, who were thus enabled to capture Ramadi (September 28th); and did not prevent the opening attack on Gaza and Beersheba (October 31st). So successful was the latter that by November 11th the Turks had been forced back to the Jerusalem-Ludd Railway; four days later Ramleh was captured and, on the 16th, Jaffa. On December 9th, Jerusalem itself surrendered, and the last of the "holy cities" was lost to the Turkish hold. In Irak, the beginning of November saw the occupation of Tekrit, and shortly afterwards the death, from cholera, of General Maude. His successor, General Marshall, continued the advance in December via the Kifri-Kirkuk plateau, thus avoiding the desolate Tigris plain. Kifri was occupied in January, 1918; Hit shortly afterwards; and Kirkuk early in May. The new German offensive in France had, in the meanwhile, severely hampered the Palestine operations, many British units being ordered to France; and little was done till the autumn, when the offensive was suddenly resumed with startling results. On September 19th, General Allenby attacked on a wide front and actually

reached the enemy field headquarters at Nazareth within twenty-four hours, Liman von Sanders himself narrowly escaping capture ; the Sharifian Arabs under Faisal and Lawrence cut across the Hijaz Railway at Dera'a, thus isolating the Turkish forces at Medina and other points in the south ; Haifa was occupied on September 23rd, and the Damascus-Beirut Road reached on the 30th. The next day Damascus itself was occupied by both British and Arab forces. The same week had also witnessed the surrender of the Turkish forces in Irak at Shergat, thus marking the official end of the Mesopotamian campaign. The rest is merely a tale of the occupation of ex-enemy towns ; Beirut on October 8th, Homs on the 16th, Tripoli two days later, Hama on the 20th, and Aleppo on the 26th. Two days later came the Armistice of Mudros, which formed the official end, so far as the Arab world was concerned, of the great war.

For those Arabs who had definitely thrown in their lot with the Allies, particularly the Nationalists, the future seemed rosy indeed. But there were already clouds on the horizon. After the occupation of Beirut, for instance, the question of whose flag was to be hoisted led to a " scene " between the Arabs and the French, which was only ended by the tact of General Allenby. In Damascus and Aleppo, the Nationalist leaders were already embarrassed by the arrival of powerful Arab chieftains who had done nothing to help the cause, but trusted to their influence to secure themselves some share of the spoils ; Ibn Sa'ud, conscious of his power and gravely mistrustful of the intentions of his old ally, England, was anxiously watching the antics of the new King of the Hijaz ; and Egypt, tired of a war in which she was merely a useful backwater, and embittered by the harsh quality of British war-time control, was growing dangerously restive. The Arabs and the friends of the Arabs were soon to reach the realisation that the Armistice had not ended their struggles and trials, but had merely changed their direction.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ARMISTICE AND AFTER

THOUGH the various armistices arranged between the numerous combatants of the great war conveniently mark the beginning of the great peace which has followed it, there is, in the consideration of Arab affairs, actually no just division possible between the two. The main features which have governed post-war Arab politics had already been given their present direction by events in the war, and were in reality, as has already been pointed out, based on principles in existence long before the war. The reaction of the Arabs against the Turks, and the rivalry of Great Britain and France in Arab lands were tendencies of long standing, which had only been partially deflected from their course by the Turkish revolution of 1908 and the sudden intervention of Germany, Italy and, at a much greater distance, Russia in Arabian affairs. The events of the war served in great measure to drive away the newcomers, with the exception of Italy, and to restore the old situation. Turkey was eliminated from the scene, which meant in practice a considerable strengthening of the positions of both France and Great Britain. What had formerly been indirect influence was now become direct administrative control. "Spheres of influence" had become, in the jargon of the day "mandates." A part of the world in which France and England had intrigued against each other for over a century now offered itself as a sacrifice for an amicable "cutting" and division of spoils. On the other hand, the war seemed to have brought, too, to the Arab Nationalists themselves legitimate reasons for great expectations. Arabs had fought on the winning side (as well as on the losing) ; an Arab king had found international recognition, and Arab "aims" world-wide advertisement ;

Turkey had gone, and however destructive, from the Nationalist point of view, the real aims of the Allied statesmen might be, they were likely to be hampered in the execution of imperialistic plans by the general war-weariness of their own peoples, as well as by their public adherence to the idealistic terms of peace laid down by the United States. The jubilation of both European Powers and the Arabs was genuine and natural ; it was, however, short-sighted. The history of the ten years which has followed the Armistice is, in the main, that of gradual disillusionment on both sides, and the return of each to the pre-war position. The battle continues, roughly, between France and England and local Arab nationalistic groups, any two of which are likely to be allied at any time against the third. Turkey has gone, and an important new pawn—the Zionists of Palestine—has been introduced into the game ; otherwise it continues as before.

The first important post-war event was the attempt to adapt the famous Fourteen Points of President Wilson to the peace settlement. The Points had actually been promulgated as early as January, 1918, but owing to the fact that they formed a peace-aim rather than an immediate war objective, it was not until the discussion of the peace terms became a practicable question that their importance was realized. For the Arab world their main application lay in the Twelfth Point, which laid it down that :

The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life *and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.*

If this meant anything at all, it meant a direct promise that in the case of the Arabs, an effort would be made to re-create the Arab world in what we have termed the old "home provinces" of the race : Syria (including Palestine), Irak and Arabia proper. Similarly worded promises had been issued at various times during the course of hostilities—as, for instance, when General Maude entered Baghdad ; but the long political experience and natural cynicism of

the Arabs had prevented their taking these too seriously. In November, 1918, however, ten days after the Armistice of Mudros, a public declaration was issued jointly by the British and French Governments to the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories, which stated *inter alia* that the aims of the Allies included :

the complete and final enfranchisement of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks, and the establishment of national governments and administrations *drawing their authority from the initiative and free choice of the native populations.*

This same underlying principle was still visible six months later in the Covenant of the newly-constituted international body known as the League of Nations ; which Covenant formed a definite part of the treaties of peace presented for signature by the Allied and Associated Powers to Germany on May 7th, 1919, and to Austria-Hungary on June 2nd. Article 22 of this Covenant laid it down that :

To those colonies and territories, which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them, and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization, and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant. The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who, by reasons of their resources, their experience or their geographical position, can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League. . . . Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized, subject to the rendering of administrative

advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. *The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.*

The theory underlying the new mandate system—that of individual trusteeship applied on a large scale to a nation—was not actually a new one. The idea of making a single Power or group of Powers, or even a single family or man, trustee for the administration of an important or debatable piece of territory had been put into practice at least as early as the time of the Crusades ; in more modern times Greece, Egypt, the Congo and Tangier had each at one time or another formed subjects for a somewhat similar treatment. There was a general feeling, not actually expressed in international law but still existing, that the difference between an actual colony or dependency on the one hand, and a protectorate on the other, lay in a certain recognition on the part of the occupying Power of moral obligations, not only to the inhabitants, but to the outside world as well. The novelty which the mandate system introduced, however, lay in the fact that the trust was held not on behalf of an undefined world opinion or loosely-defined alliance of Powers but in the name of a properly-defined legal entity, an actual constituted body, a body, moreover, which it was open to all and every independent government in the world to join. The creation of the League of Nations was rightly held by public opinion throughout the civilized world to be a genuine step forward in the realm of international political organization. That its mandate system has proved in practice perhaps the least satisfactory of the League's many activities is due less to any inherent fault in the League itself than to the fact that the chief powers concerned, England and France, were not prepared actually to carry out the obligations which they had laid upon themselves. The two powers had already committed themselves by the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement to a course of action in the Arab lands which it is difficult to reconcile with either the Twelfth Point (to which they both solemnly subscribed in the treaties of peace), their own joint Declaration of November, 1918, or the conditions of Article 22 of the

Covenant, to which, again, they both solemnly subscribed in accepting the mandates. The League, therefore, can scarcely be blamed for the partition of the Arab countries by which the legitimate hopes of the Arab Nationalists were dashed to the ground, and the chances of the modern Arab race compromised indefinitely. The divisions had, at any rate in the rough, been already agreed upon, and the League was merely asked to initial what Great Britain and France had previously decided. This being so, it was ridiculous to expect that any effort would be made to apply the principle of self-determination as laid down in Article 22 ; and, in point of fact, no effort was made at any time to ascertain the wishes of the populations of Syria, Palestine or Irak with regard to the choice of a mandatory power, with the exception of the King-Crane report on Syria which, though originally suggested, apparently, by the League, did not receive its official support. [The report, it may be mentioned, placed France as the least desired of the mandatory powers by the Syrians ; yet France obtained the mandate.] Nor could it be expected, under the circumstances, that France or Great Britain would attempt to honour their own declaration in favour of "national governments drawing their authority from the initiative and free choice of the native population." The only administration which came within this definition at all was that organized by Faisal and his supporters in Syria after the Armistice ; yet it was eventually upset by France, while Great Britain stood by and said nothing ! No Arab native population would have voted of their own free will for the handing over of the government of Syria to France ; no Arab population would have voted for the coming of the Zionists. Both Great Britain and France knew this perfectly well, but having determined to carry these projects through, they were forced to throw overboard any little promises or agreements or declarations which happened to stand in the way. That they were thereby dishonouring their own signatures seems to have meant little to the Governments of the hectic post-war period ; a "scrap of paper" may make a very good debating point to start a war on, but it ought not to be allowed to interfere with serious business at the end of it.

In only one of the Arab countries was any attempt made to carry out the terms of the treaties as applied to the native inhabitants. In Irak a genuine effort was made by the British authorities on the spot to ascertain the wishes of the people. It is perhaps significant that Irak was the one country that was somewhat isolated from the control of the British authorities at home, and was less concerned, at any rate for the moment, with the various ambitions of the Powers. At the same time, it has to be remembered that the apparently dishonourable conduct of the British and French statesmen is excusable to some extent by the needs of war. It is possible—though the point has not yet been proved—that President Wilson and the Allied Powers were speaking to some extent deliberately with their tongues in their cheeks when they stressed the self-determination of the Arab countries in their statements of war-aims. They had when speaking to consider, not only the post-war situation, but the actual situation at the time, and if they could hope to gain some military advantage by the raising of extravagant hopes in the breasts of oppressed peoples, they were perfectly justified in doing so. As responsible statesmen, they must have known that a good many promises would have to go by the board, should the time ever come to redeem them. Even President Wilson himself, the high priest of the doctrine of self-determination, was not quite logical in its detailed application ; he supported the Zionist policy in Palestine, for example, although he must have known that it ran directly contrary to the interests of the natives he had expressed himself as so anxious to serve. Indeed, he laid it down (February 11th, 1918) as one of the "Four Principles"—the Principles followed, and to some extent explained the Points—that "all well-defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord or antagonism." Yet the President himself helped to introduce a "new element of discord" into the Arab lands by his support of Zionism. Of such contradictions are even the greatest of statesmen made up.

But even if the Allied leaders were able to justify to

their own consciences the broadcasting of idealistic and highly inflammable political hopes as a *ruse de guerre*, it was hardly to be expected that the smaller nations concerned would see the matter in quite the same light. Before the war a Western man, and particularly an Englishman or an American, represented in the Arab's eyes a certain standard of honour and business dealing which he regarded as the highest in the world. Among his fellow-countrymen, even among his own co-religionists, among the Near Eastern cosmopolitans whom he met in the course of political or business intercourse—Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Persians and so on—he was accustomed to a low morality. He was prepared for it, expected nothing else, and was ready to meet guile with guile, plausible promise with insincere flattery. But westerners, he had come to realize, were different ; one could trust their words and promises, and even if they let one down, there were always the consuls, whose standards were, the Arabs found, irreproachable. The people had found from experience that the word of a westerner, particularly an Englishman, was his bond ; his promise was "good"—even if it cost him a great deal to carry it out. The whole position of British traders and administrators, of French colonists and of American missionaries and teachers had been built up on this faith, and on this alone. It was in the light of this, for example, that the extraordinary political position of the British in the Persian Gulf had come into being, under which innumerable local disputes were brought voluntarily for solution to the judgment seat of the British Resident, in spite of the fact that his decisions possessed no legal authority whatever. The Arab, often shifty enough himself, has a deep respect for character ; straight and open dealing, in either public or private life, will always win him over and secure a permanent ascendancy over his mind. The main reason why the Germans of pre-war days never really succeeded in under-mining the British position with the Arabs in spite of the advantages of money and novelty, was that they were suspected by the Arab public of being unreliable and untrustworthy.

It was this asset of priceless worth that the Allied powers, by their promises made during the war and their openly dis-

played intention of immediately breaking them after the armistice, threatened to throw away for ever. It would hardly be true to say that it was deliberately done, appearances notwithstanding. Preoccupations far weightier than Near Eastern problems rested on the various Allied statesmen nearer home. For at least twelve months after the armistice there was a serious danger that some outbreak or other might occur again in Europe ; the war, after all, had been in origin European, and it was essential that that unrestful continent should be quietened down before attention was given to the outlying parts of the world. Probably, too, few among the men responsible for the mandate decisions ever gave serious thought to the difference of standard between western and eastern thought on political matters. The westerner is, in politics, a natural cynic ; he does not for one moment expect a government or state to live up to the standard which he exacts from his own family or neighbours. To the Arab, on the other hand, there is no such thing as the double standard. If a British official is found to be honest, then the British Government must be honest ; if a German business man is found to be unreliable, then Germany as a whole is not to be trusted. Just as the religion of Islam—which is the Arab point of view placed in a world setting—recognizes no difference between the secular and the spiritual, so does the Arab himself recognize no definite line between public and private conduct, or between the policy of a state and the behaviour of its servants. The point of view accepted in the West, that a man may be a crooked diplomatist and yet a perfectly honest and respectable person in private life ; or that a State's servants may be upright and reliable and yet the policy of that State may be crooked and tortuous, finds in him no sympathetic response.

It can be clearly seen, then, what disappointments and disillusionments the post-armistice days held for the Arab world. Nor were they retained only in the intellectual sphere ; in the period 1920-26 there was almost constant war in one or other of the Arab lands, and, in fact, alterations were made in the political firmament almost as startling as those of the Great War itself.

It will be remembered that the Armistice of Mudros found the Sharifian army in Aleppo and Damascus side by side with the victorious troops of Lord Allenby, attached to which was a small French force, half naval and half military.¹ The Allied Governments having already accepted the King of the Hijaz as the representative and spokesman of the Arab nation, the latter instructed his son Faisal, still with the Sharifian forces in Syria, to attend the peace conference in Paris. Meanwhile, temporary arrangements were made for the administration of the occupied territories. The British Mesopotamian army advanced across the armistice line (under strong Turkish protest) and occupied Mosul town and the larger part of the *vilayet*; the seaboard of Syria was handed over to the French, who made Beirut their headquarters; the interior was placed under a Sharifian administration in Damascus, with Faisal as its titular head and Ali Riza Pasha Rikabi, a well-known and influential local public man, as its chief administrator. Palestine remained under the British military administration which had been set up after the entry into Jerusalem; certain changes were made, however, to adapt it to the Zionist proposals of the British Government. Hebrew was adopted, in addition to Arabic and English as an "official" language; and recognition was given to the commission sent to Palestine by the Zionist organization to act as a link between itself and the British authorities. A Zionist delegation was also, at the instance of the British Government, permitted to attend the peace conference.

In the autumn of 1919 came the final withdrawal of the British army from the French zone in Syria, and trouble almost immediately began to show its head. The better classes of the civil population, well educated, widely read, and possessing, through the great American University of Beirut, many Western affiliations, were strong on the doctrine of "self-determination" and full of resentment at the French occupation; the French officers and officials, their minds deep in the past and full of the romantic

¹ This is the force which figures on the War Memorial in the Avenue des Français in Beirut:—"Aux libérateurs du Liban et de la Syrie." There is no mention of either British or Arab troops having assisted in the operation.

tradition which had bound France to Syria in the days of the Crusades, at first received this attitude with incredulity, and then, finding it quite genuine, were in their turn antagonized. Both sides (needless to say) blamed their disappointment on to the British, who had conquered the country with specious promises, and had retired giving neither side what it wanted. The lower classes of the cities, accustomed to the generous, open-handedness of the highly-paid Australian and British troops, resented the parsimony of the unfortunate French conscripts. Soon the Turkish nationalists from Angora, quick to see the situation, were playing on the susceptibilities of the Muslim population ; and they were aided by the injudicious activities of many French officials, who not only showed a dangerous favouritism for the unfortunate and unpopular Armenians, but frequently taunted Muslim opinion with references to the "victory of the Cross over the Crescent."

In Palestine things were not much better, in spite of the fact that the temporary administration had worked unexpectedly well, going a considerable distance towards paying its own way, and making very marked improvements in the roads, railways and other public works of the country. Economically, in fact, the country was making surprising progress ; but politically all progress was killed by the Balfour Declaration, which had destroyed confidence in the disinterestedness of the British, set community against community, and aroused extravagant hopes among the younger Jews of which they were eager to take advantage. Meanwhile in Damascus the Arab Government was faring little better than its neighbours. The Amir Faisal, as a sharif and the son of the King of the Hijaz, possessed all the prestige which both his birth and his known position in Europe could give him ; but experience soon showed that he was by no means *persona grata* with all the Nationalists. Very soon, in fact, the old difference between the purely Syrian nationalists and those of the broad Arab school began to show itself. A rift began to open between the "patriarchal" Arabs of the desert and the Hijaz, and the town Arabs of Damascus and settled Syria, and Faisal and his immediate supporters were not strong enough to close it.

The British acceptance of the French occupation of the Lebanon and the Zionist schemes in Palestine tended to make Britain unpopular, and the Amir, as a known friend to Britain, became suspect. Then came the successes of the Turkish nationalists, which seemed to offer the Syrian nationalists another, perhaps more effective, way of realizing their ambitions. What have we to do, they began to say, with this rough Arab of the Hijaz, with his untrustworthy European allies who are merely making use of him for purposes of their own? Better far for us to make common headway with the Turks, who are fellow Muslims, who have successfully defied Europe and who may yet free the Near East from the shadow of the West which lies across it like a darkening cloud. Thus Faisal had soon to deal with strong disloyal elements whom he was not in a position to control, and the situation was made more difficult by the fact that the bedouin tribes had come out of the war far better armed than before, and therefore far less ready to listen to reason or bear with organized civil control. Soon raiding began by independent bodies into "enemy" territory both in Syria and Palestine; protests from the British and French naturally resulted, and Faisal, already slightly discredited among his own countrymen, began to lose prestige with his European friends also. But the Amir, faced with the almost hopeless task of organizing a kingdom from conflicting elements in a country of which all the ports and richer coastal areas had been taken from him, made a gallant struggle; at the end of 1919, backed by an able Iraqi who had been a Turkish general, Yassin Pasha al-Hashimi, he introduced compulsory military service, and did his best to quell the raiding propensities of his nominal followers. But the whole area was rapidly getting out of not only such control as he could bring to bear, but of British and French control as well. The delay in the peace settlement all through 1919, the continued Turkish nationalist successes and increasing Zionist propaganda were all playing a part in the rapid disintegration of settled order and government. In December a serious collision occurred between the French and the Arabs near Baalbek, and it was followed in the new year by fighting in widely separated places from

Alexandretta to the Palestine border. The apparent weakness of the French led the Syrian nationalists to take an extreme step ; in March they convoked a national congress to sit at Damascus, and on the 8th declared for independence and proclaimed the Amir Faisal as King of Syria. Thus came into being the only government in the Arab mandated territories actually " drawing its authority from the initiative and free choice of the native population." Yet the new King (who had only been persuaded to accept the throne by threats on his life if he refused) knew well that such a step would be unacceptable to the Allies and would compromise him fatally. However, he organized a cabinet, with Ali Riza Pasha at its head and Yassin Pasha as Minister of Defence, and did his best to restrain the ardour of his followers, which was now, however, becoming quite uncontrollable. Bands of nationalists sprang up all over the country ; Antioch was seized from the French and Deir az-Zoir from the English ; the Nebi Musa celebrations at Jerusalem (a Muslim feast in honour of Moses, invented by the Ottoman authorities to counter the Orthodox Church celebrations of Easter) were used to spread anti-Jewish propaganda, and a riot ensued which had to be quelled by British troops. In the north, the Turkish nationalists took the opportunity of attacking the French garrisons and of stirring up the tribes in Irak, now soon to become the storm-centre. King Faisal, requested by the peace conference to repair to Paris and explain the situation, twice refused ; a bad tactical error on his part, since the invitation gave him the opportunity not only of placating the Allies but of releasing himself from an impossible situation in Damascus. His excuse, that his presence in Syria was necessary to prevent a wholesale offensive on the part of the nationalists, was probably genuine, but it was not accepted by the French, who had now made up their minds to subdue not only the coast but the interior of the country as well. An intervention by England might have saved the Damascus State ; but the French pressed their claims under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the British Government gave way. By a convention of September, 1919, the British had agreed not only to the French control of the seaboard, but

to the withdrawal of all British troops or supervisory officers from "Inner Syria"; which meant in practice a formal withdrawal of British support from the little Syrian State, in readiness for it to be swallowed up by the French. In fact Britain, faced with a situation in which she was bound by treaty obligations to two parties, a stronger and a weaker, overcame her difficulty by throwing over the weaker in favour of the stronger. In April, 1920, the Supreme Council decided that the mandate for Syria should go to France (in flat contradiction of what evidence was available of the wishes of the inhabitants). Faisal, always a realist, was prepared to accept the situation, and the French on their side even went so far as to offer a large financial subvention if their mandate was publicly accepted by the Syrian congress. In face of the British defection, this was undoubtedly the best bargain the Syrians could have made. But the more influential party, secretly counting on Turkish support, would have none of it; Riza Pasha, trying to keep moderate counsels, was swept away, and a new ministry under the leadership of an extremist, Hassan Bey at-Tassi, came into power. The French then announced that they would resume control of the standard gauge railway from Aleppo to Rayak, on the Damascus-Beirut narrow-gauge system, which had been built and operated by a French company before the war. Several members of the Council of the Lebanon, who were known to be hostile to the French occupation, were placed under arrest at the same time. Shortly afterwards the French presented an ultimatum, marched into Syria, defeated the half-organized nationalist army at Khan Meisulun in the Anti-Lebanon mountains and entered Damascus. The nationalist administration was abolished, and Faisal withdrew to Palestine and thence to Europe.

An elaborate new scheme of organization was now introduced into Syria as a whole, with a view to quashing national aspirations once and for all. The Lebanon area, which was largely Christian and therefore, as the French thought, pro-French, was enlarged and made a separate State; to the north of it another new State was created, named after the Alawiyi, a Shiah sect strongly represented in the

neighbourhood ; its capital was to be at Latikiyah. To the north of this again came another new State of Aleppo ; while Damascus was to become the centre of yet another political unit, the Government of Damascus (afterwards re-named the State of Syria). Finally, the Druses of the so-called *Jebel ad-Druse* or Druse Mountain in the Hauran were to be formed into a fifth little Government. All these new little provinces were to be independent of each other, being linked only by the French High Commission sitting in Beirut. Each had its own stamps, its own system of taxation and was intended to have its own coinage, though this was not systematically carried out. Unfortunate Syria, neither a large nor a rich country, already deprived of Palestine which is actually an integral part of her territory, was now to be cut up into five little States, all entirely helpless by themselves, each with the characteristically French burdens of a large gendarmerie and over-populated officialdom. By means of this ingenious device the French hoped to trade on the well-known Arab weakness for disunion, by emphasizing the minor differences and divisions of a minority-ridden community, and thus rendering each portion weaker in the face of determined French penetration. Such was the French idea of the " absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development " assured to the Syrians by the Twelfth Point !

In the meanwhile attention had shifted to Irak, where the British local administration was faced with a crisis which its fine record hardly deserved. Like Palestine, Mesopotamia had been governed since the armistice by a semi-military administration improvised for the occasion, and drawing its legal authority from martial law. Numerous special difficulties faced the British administrators as the victorious armies pushed on up-stream. There was much destitution and poverty (amounting at times to actual starvation), and the whole economic and social life of the country seemed to have collapsed. Officials of experience were almost nonexistent, since the occupants of all high responsible posts had left with the Turks. In spite of these difficulties, a system of government was evolved which administered the country better, probably, than had been the case for a

millennium. Unfortunately, it suffered from certain obvious weaknesses, which in the end proved too much for it. It was expensive and perhaps rather extravagant ; it was unpopular in England, where the word Mesopotamia raised only memories of unpleasant war-time disasters ; it had no guarantee of permanence ; and it was not too well liked by the inhabitants, partly because it attempted to introduce law, order and taxation into a country which cared for none of these things, and partly because it replaced the local Government clerk and minor official by the Indian babu, who was more trustworthy and efficient, but who is not, at any time, from the point of view of those under him, a pleasant person to get on with. Lastly, its political weakness compelled it to make considerable use of the tribal shaiyks, whom even the Turks had the wit to recognize as the most dangerous class in the country. In addition, it had to face an atmosphere of general uncertainty, both among officials and the public, as to the future of the country, owing to the delay in the signing of the peace treaty ; considerable lessening of the British garrison, due to rapid demobilization, and at the same time increasing Turkish nationalist propaganda ; and the continued and cumulative effect of the Syrian unrest next door. In the summer of 1920 the British suddenly found themselves faced with a serious rebellion, which was only put down with some trouble and at considerable cost ; and this led to a persistent demand on the part of the British public at home that an effort should be made to settle the Mesopotamian question once and for all. In October a High Commissioner (Sir Percy Cox) was appointed, with full powers. A Council of State was called together, with the Nakib of Baghdad as president, and preparations made for the inauguration of a real local government. In the new year Faisal, who had remained in Europe since the Syrian *débâcle*, to protest against the Allied treatment of the Arab cause, was suggested in British official circles as a possibility for the throne of a new Irak kingdom, an idea which was warmly endorsed by Col. Lawrence, who had fought hard since the armistice, on the strength of his war-time reputation, for the proper consideration of Arab problems by the Allied governments and peoples. In March, 1921, Mr.

Winston Churchill, who had recently organized a special "Middle East Department," in the Colonial Office, to deal with Arab affairs, summoned a conference at Cairo to review the whole situation. This conference practically decided the future of Irak. A few months later Faisal landed at Basrah and publicly offered himself as a candidate for the throne. It was known that his candidature was acceptable to the British Government, and that local people who disagreed too violently might find themselves in the unpleasant position of Sayid Talib Pasha, a local notable and politician, who was suddenly kidnapped one afternoon in a Baghdad suburban road by a British military patrol and removed to Ceylon. Not unnaturally, a rough referendum of notables ended in an overwhelming vote in favour of Faisal, who was accordingly crowned king on August 23rd. It was arranged that his brother, Abdullah, who had also been a candidate for the Irak throne, should be compensated by the amirate of Kerak, now renamed Trans-Jordania, which formed all that was left of the original Sharifian kingdom of Syria after the French had entered Damascus.

These arrangements, coupled with the appointment of a British Jew (Sir Herbert Samuel) as the first High Commissioner of Palestine, completed the Allies' arrangements for the post-war Arab countries. The configuration (if the minor States of the Arabian coast are ignored) was roughly as follows: Syria formed a loose confederation of five provinces, linked together by the French High Commission; Palestine to Jordan was under the direct administration of a British High Commissioner; the country across the Jordan (Kerak or Trans-Jordania) formed a principality under the Amir Abdullah, but under British mandate; the Hijaz to the south formed a kingdom under the rule of Hosein, father of Abdullah and Faisal, who was independent but in undefined political relationship with Great Britain. In the Najd, Ibn Sa'ud was slowly but steadily extending his sway at the expense of Ibn Rashid, and had already (in March, 1919) come to loggerheads with King Hosein, and inflicted a severe defeat on a Hijazi force sent up under the Amir Abdullah to take the oasis of Khurma from the Wahabis, under the terms of a British arbitration. Ibn Sa'ud had also,

by the summer of 1920, successfully invaded Asir, and captured its capital, Ibha. The Idrisi of Asir, hemmed in between the Wahabis on one side and the ever-active Imam of San'a on the other, was definitely losing position as an Arabian power. Owing to the death of Shaikh Mubarak of Koweit during the war, the friendly relations between that small state and Ibn Sa'ud declined, the Wahabi leader having now, by his pre-war occupation of Hasa, secured ports of his own on the Persian Gulf, through which he steadily diverted the Najd trade which had gone in the old days through Koweit. To the British, too, Koweit had ceased to have much political value, owing to their war-time conquest of Irak; and its rôle on the international stage seemed for the time being, to be finished. Both Ibn Sa'ud and King Hosein were in receipt of British subsidies, as were the three mandated States of Irak, Palestine and Trans-Jordania.

Of the outlying provinces of the Arab world, two only, Morocco and Egypt, need to be mentioned. Of the others, Algeria and Tunis were peacefully advancing under French direction, and Tripoli and Cyrenaica (now jointly named "Libya") remained in a state of chaos, caused by the rivalry of local chieftains and the efforts of the Italians to re-conquer the country. In the French zone of Morocco, that remarkable administrator, General Lyautey, was still engaged, as he had been throughout the war, in pacifying the country and extending French control over it; to the north the Spaniards were engaged perseveringly, but with much less success, in the same task. Much of the mountainous area of the country remained, for the present, wild and free and the problem of Tangier city, in spite of local protest, was still held up by disagreement among the Powers. In Egypt the situation was much more complicated. The war had profoundly modified the relations of the British and Egyptians. The country had, in fact, been placed in a very anomalous position by the war, and the annoyance of her educated classes was by no means unjustified. Transferred by the stroke of a pen from a province of Turkey to a British protectorate, transformed by the necessities of war into a kind of vast base camp for



In French North Africa

British troops, Egypt was allowed no official share in the war, and yet had to submit to numerous requisitions and restrictions, some of which were perhaps unnecessarily harsh and oppressive. The heavy call upon the comparatively small band of Arabic-speaking Englishmen caused a constant drain on the British official personnel, who were replaced at times by very inadequate substitutes. Friction between the natives and the British increased by leaps and bounds. The nationalist movement, given a strong anti-British tone in its early days by its French cultural affinities, received a tremendous impetus from the various Allied promises which followed the enunciation of the Fourteen Points ; and in October, 1917, Sultan Hosein, perhaps the one man of position in Egypt who possessed the necessary power and tact to save the situation, died. He was succeeded by his half-brother Fuad, the third of the sons of Khedive Ismail to reach the throne. The end of the war, naturally, turned the extravagant hopes of the nationalists into definite expectations. Was not Egypt, as much as Syria or Irak, a freed province of Turkey ? Did she not, therefore, come within the provisions of the Twelfth Point and the Allied Declarations ? Had she not even, as a country far more advanced than the other Arab provinces along the road of modern civilisation, a better right than they to the "freedom of indigenous populations" promised by the Allies ? How could France and Britain in common justice recognise the independent kingdom of the Hijaz, a desert land of naked Arabs with nothing but the two holy cities to distinguish it from any other part of Arabia, and ignore the claims of Egypt, which had enjoyed a cultured and civilised life of several thousand years ? So reasoned not only the extreme nationalists, but also moderate men of all classes. In 1918 a nationalist committee was formed, with a well known local politician of considerable ability, Sa'ad Zaghlul Pasha, at its head. Permission was asked to dispatch a deputation to the peace conference ; it was refused by the British Government, as was also a request of a similar sort made by the Premier of Egypt, Hosein Rushdi Pasha, and supported by the British High Commissioner. As a consequence Rushdi Pasha resigned,

and the nationalists began to grow so powerful that Zaghlul Pasha and several other leaders were deported by the British to Malta. This was the signal for the bursting of the storm. Attacks on British soldiers and civilians were followed by the destruction of telegraph wires and the fouling of railway tracks ; Cairo was temporarily isolated, and two weeks of extreme tension intervened before order could be restored. Tactics were now changed on both sides. The British Government dispatched Lord Allenby, the conqueror of Palestine, to restore confidence ; and the nationalists substituted passive resistance in the form of industrial strikes, which were still serious enough to require special proclamation to bring them forcibly to an end. The British Government now decided to send a commission, under the presidency of Lord Milner, to report on the whole situation. The potential value of the visit was considerably lessened by the obstructive tactics of the nationalists, who maintained a policy of boycott which was widely followed. But it led directly to the so-called Milner-Zaghlul Agreement, the outcome of a meeting in Europe between the mission and the nationalist representatives, and this in turn offered a basis for possible negotiation. The effort was made ; in July 1921 an Egyptian delegation under the presidency of the Premier, Adly Pasha, visited London to negotiate a permanent settlement with the British Government, but the Egyptians refused to agree to the British requirements in the way of the army of occupation, and the negotiations fell through. There followed a further period of rioting and unrest ; Zaghlul, outside the Government and holding no official position, remained the most popular figure in the country, and outshone in prestige both the British Government and the local Egyptian administration. Further disturbances ended in a second deportation of Zaghlul and a final British effort to end an intolerable situation. In February, 1922, the British Government, after consultation with Parliament, announced the termination of the Protectorate and the recognition of Egypt as an independent, sovereign State, subject to the reservation of certain disputed points. Sultan Fuad proclaimed Egypt an independent, constitutional monarchy, and himself took the title of King.

Thus Egypt achieved the status of a more advanced Irak, with a King, Cabinet and Parliament on western lines and with theoretical independence under the law ; but with, on the other hand, a foreign army in occupation and foreign officials in all the strategic posts in her civil service. The vexed question of the status of her huge foreign population remained unsettled, as did that of the exact position of Egypt *vis-à-vis* Great Britain. In other words, the real difficulties were not solved, but postponed to a more convenient time. For all practical purposes Egypt was placed in the same position as Irak, Syria or Palestine, except that in her case the mandate was issued, not through any outside body like the League of Nations, but by Britain herself. The growing army of semi-independent Arab States had received a new accession of strength.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LATEST PHASE

Thus we come to the most recent phase of Arab history, which has revealed no very striking change or modification of the post-war arrangements made by the Allies, with the notable exception of Arabia herself. Here and there efforts have been made to upset these arrangements, sometimes by force ; in 1925, for example, Spanish and French power in Morocco was seriously challenged by a cleverly executed rebellion under the leadership of an educated Riffi tribesman named Abdul Karim and towards the end of the same year the trouble in Syria, which had remained fairly chronic, came to a head in an outbreak by the Druses, which was afterwards converted by French mismanagement into a general, national rebellion. In both outbreaks the chances of success of the rebels were ruined by that lack of the ability to co-operate which has so often held the Arabs back from their political desires. The campaign of Abdul Karim may be regarded merely as an isolated incident in the gradual pacification of a wild mountainous country by Spain and France ; the Syrian trouble is both more symptomatic and more interesting and seems likely to achieve permanent results in a modification of the French attitude towards the country. More interesting than either, however, has been the extraordinary transformation in Arabia proper, which has swept away two important States—one of them an ally of the Allies—and created a great central kingdom bringing more Arabian ground under one rule than has been the case since the days of the Carmathians.

It will be remembered that the armistice left Arabia with, apart from numerous minor principalities, more or less grouped together by British protection, four States of independent status. In the Najd the two rulers of Riyadh

and Hail, Ibn Sa'ud and Ibn Rashid, contested the hegemony of the central area. West of them in the Hijaz, the holy land of Islam, the erstwhile sharifian amir of Mecca had emerged from the war as the King of the Hijaz ; while in the Yemen the Imam of San'a, head of the Zaidite Shiahs, continued to hold his own. Of the minor chiefs, the only two of political importance were the Idrisi in Asir, between the Hijaz and the Yemen, now leading a rather hunted existence wedged in between the continued expansion of Ibn Sa'ud and the Imam ; and the Shaikh of Koweit, whose little principality was also on the decline politically. Up to 1924 the King of the Hijaz, in spite of one severe defeat at the hands of Ibn Sa'ud, continued to exercise the high position won for himself during the war, as the national spokesman of the Arab race ; though his position in this or other respects was never acknowledged either by Ibn Sa'ud or the Imam of San'a. But even after the Syrian *débâcle* of 1920, the King was still strongly represented outside of Arabia, with one son Faisal as King of Irak, another son Abdullah as Amir of Trans-Jordania, and his youngest son, Zaid, an Oxford undergraduate, as a tentatively suggested Amir of Kurdistan. (His fourth and eldest son, Ali, remained throughout with his father in the Hijaz as the heir apparent to the throne.)

The culmination of Hosein's strange career came in 1924, through the accidental revival of the old, historical question of the Caliphate. It will be remembered that Abu Bakr, the first successor of the Prophet in the original Commonwealth, took the title of *Khalifah* (Successor), and all down the history of the Arab Empire and its successor, the Turkish sultanate of Constantinople, the Caliphate had remained as a symbol of the ancient unity of the Muslim faith, because in the old Arab Commonwealth religion and politics had been, in theory at least, one. And the symbol had continued to carry weight with the people in spite of the fact that the Sultan of Morocco had carried on a tradition of an independent western Caliphate inherited from the Arab Caliphs of Spain, and that the title had been frequently abused by small eastern potentates and fanatical rebels of all ages—as, for instance, the “*Khalifah*” whose destruction

formed the object of a celebrated modern Anglo-Egyptian campaign in the Sudan. The title of Caliph had been regarded by some of the more discerning Turkish Sultans as the greatest asset in their political armoury ; it formed the basis of that pan-Islamic sentiment by which Sultan Abdul Hamid, late in the nineteenth century, hoped to preserve Islam from European penetration and domination. But the events of the war, and more especially of the post-war period, had caused a revolution in Turkish thought, in which the Caliphate had come under suspicion. It was a venerable institution, possessing great sentimental influence, and capable in the hands of an able man of proving a dangerous enemy to that new receptacle of the people's will, the Grand National Assembly of Angora ; also it was expensive, and its utilitarian value was doubtful. The first step came in 1922, when the sultanate was abolished, the ruling sultan, Muhammad VI banished, and Turkey declared a republic. A cousin of the late sultan, Abdul Majid, was declared Caliph, but his exact position and duties were never defined ; for in March, 1924, the Turkish Caliphate followed the sultanate to the grave.

This action on the part of the Turks came undoubtedly as a profound shock to the Arab world. It was the first clear indication of that deliberate policy of turning away from the Arab cultural connection which was later to be exemplified in the reading of the Koran in the Turkish mosques in Turkish instead of Arabic (in contradiction of the traditional idea that the Book, being the word of God, could never be translated), in the renunciation of the old Muslim forms of headgear, and, finally, in the substitution of the Latin for the Arabic alphabet in the writing of Turkish. It served mentally to throw the Arabs back on themselves, so to speak ; to prove definitely even to the most reactionary "die-hard" and lover of the old regime of Abdul Hamid, that the Ottoman Empire as they understood it had gone for ever. There was obviously a great opportunity for an Arab leader to take advantage of the sentiments roused by the rather brutal denunciation by the Turks of the historic Arab connection, and to place himself at the head of a pan-Arab movement ; and this Hosein

attempted to do. When visiting his son, Abdullah, in Trans-Jordania, he was, by previous arrangement, offered the vacant caliphate by a representative deputation of responsible Muslim interests. He accepted the honour, and was immediately acclaimed Caliph in all the Arab countries lying either directly under his rule or that of his sons ; in the Hijaz, in Irak and Trans-Jordania, as well as in many mosques in Syria and Palestine, his name was inserted in the *khutbah* and his new position in theory recognised. Unfortunately for Hosein, two of the most important modern Muslim communities absolutely declined to recognise him. In Egypt it was felt that the caliphate, if it were to be revived, would rightly rest only in the admittedly most wealthy and influential Muslim country of the day ; in India, there was a general disgust with Hosein and the Sharifian party as a whole, partly on account of the pre-war pilgrimage scandals which had brought the Amir a rather indifferent reputation, since they were commonly believed to have been connected with the building up of his not inconsiderable private fortune ; and partly because Indian Muslims considered that Hosein and his sons owed their positions entirely to the British, and that it was not dignified nor in accordance with Islamic law that an Arab prince should base a claim to the supreme pontificate on the support of infidels. Thus Hosein's caliphate could only muster a rather local following at best, and a sudden attack on the part of an old enemy close at hand was to prove its final undoing.

Ever since 1916, when the attempt of Hosein to secure a definite precedence over all the chieftains of Arabia by arrogating to himself the title of " Sultan of the Arabs " had aroused his annoyance, Ibn Sa'ud had taken little pains to conceal his impatience with his Hijazi neighbour. By this time the position of Ibn Sa'ud himself was very different from what it had been in the war. Recognised even then by trained observers as the most able and progressive prince in Arabia, Abdul Aziz had since the armistice not only consolidated his earlier hard-won gains, but had gone far towards removing possible rivalry. The end of the war had found his greatest enemy, Ibn Rashid, badly hit by the

collapse of his allies the Turks, and also beginning to feel the effects of the nibbling policy which Ibn Sa'ud consistently maintained in the form of annual raids into his rival's territory. None the less, Ibn Rashid still had the support of the Shammar, who not only counted the bulk of the inhabitants of the northern Najd among their ranks, but had important affiliations in Irak. It is possible that even Abdul Aziz would have found the final subjugation of Ibn Rashid barely possible, had not fortune, in 1920, suddenly favoured him. Sa'ud, the ruling Ibn Rashid amir since 1907, was shot dead by a relative, and this accident removed the last capable member of the ruling family. The two successors were shadows; the first took refuge finally with the Wahabi leader, and the second fled when his capital, Hail, surrendered to Ibn Sa'ud in 1921. The next year Ibn Sa'ud occupied Jauf, the great oasis on the Hail-Damascus caravan route which had been seized from Ibn Rashid at the beginning of the war by Nouri ash-Shalan of the Anaza, and thus made himself master of the whole of the old dominions of the Ibn Rashid family. The area of Wahabi activity was now driven northward so far as to threaten Trans-Jordania (where the Wahabis soon came into collision with the British R.A.F.), and the desert routes between Syria and Irak. In the other direction, Ibn Sa'ud had been beginning to feel his way south-westwards into Asir as early as 1920, and he now utilised his gains here to occupy the parts of Asir hitherto controlled by the Hijaz, and even reached the Red Sea port of Qunfudah. The oasis of Khaibar and other points on the Hijaz border, long disputed, were also occupied, and the threat to occupy the oasis of Khurma, another disputed point, led to a panic in the Hijaz and the evacuation of Taif by its inhabitants. The British Government, which had intervened without much result in this dispute, now thought the time opportune for a general discussion of Arabian affairs, and accordingly convened a conference at Koweit in November, 1923, to which representatives from Ibn Sa'ud and the three Sharifian states (the Hijaz, Irak and Trans-Jordania) were invited. The object of the British Government was partly to stabilise the situation in Arabia, if possible, by the delimitation of

permanent boundaries ; partly to forestall any idea Ibn Sa'ud might still entertain of attacking King Hosein ; and partly, to seize the opportunity of emphasizing the position of moral hegemony over the Arab world which Great Britain, in actual practice, now held. The results of the conference were disappointing ; King Hosein foolishly assumed a very truculent attitude, and Ibn Sa'ud's delegate, though courteous and careful not to give offence, let it be known quite clearly that his master was not prepared to discount in advance any ambitions he might entertain by formal promises or treaties. Ibn Sa'ud's relations with Great Britain, never very good since the early war period, were becoming obviously somewhat strained ; parties of Wahabis had again attacked outposts in Irak and Trans-Jordania, and there was thought on the British side to be a strong case for the withdrawal of the British subsidy which Ibn Sa'ud had received since the war. The withdrawal was, in fact, made as part of a general agitation in England against Arabian commitments ; the result proved, however, that it had justified its existence as the only really effective means of keeping the peace in Arabia. Its withdrawal freed the hands of Ibn Sa'ud as well as those of the British public, and the effect was dramatic. In the autumn of 1924 Ibn Sa'ud, using as a pretext one of the constant little border troubles in the oasis dividing his dominions from the Hijaz, invaded the latter in force. Taif was immediately occupied and Mecca beleaguered ; King Hosein was compelled to abdicate in favour of his son Ali, and the newly-born Arab caliphate disappeared into thin air. Very soon Ibn Sa'ud had captured Mecca and Medina, and nothing remained of the Sharifian kingdom but the town of Jiddah, which, aided by its defences and a small air force (composed mainly of Russian refugees), held out for a year. Its surrender placed the whole Hijaz in Wahabi hands once more, after the lapse of a century. Ali retired to his brother Faisal in Baghdad, and Hosein, at the suggestion of the British Government, went into retirement in Cyprus ; making at the time the third Caliph to be living in exile !

Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, who now added the title of King of the Hijaz to that of Sultan of Najd, had thus successfully

emulated the greatest feats of his ancestors. The third Wahabi Empire now controlled, like the first, the holy land of Islam ; it was greater in extent than its predecessor ; and it seemed to have more prospect of permanence. It rested for the moment, it is true, upon the achievement of one man, the quality of whose successors were unknown ; for Turki, the heir to the Wahabi throne, had died of the influenza soon after the war, and his brothers were hardly old enough as yet to display their quality to the world. But on the other hand, the condition of the Muslim world in 1925 was very different to that of a hundred years earlier. In the early nineteenth century Islam, though weak, decaying and unprogressive, was still politically independent ; the European powers had nibbled at the extremities, at European Turkey or the East Indies, but the heart remained free. The third decade of the twentieth century found every Islamic country except Arabia, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan under the direct control of one or other of the great Christian powers ; and the position of Persia and Afghanistan was very delicate, wedged in as they were between the two great competing empires of Russia and Great Britain. Turkey had shown surprising vitality and strength, but at the cost of much which the older-fashioned Muslim would regard with grave apprehension. Turkey's complete orthodoxy had been questioned before, even in the days of the Empire ; it was this suspicion which kept apart, for instance, such doughty soldiers of the faith as Sultan Abdul Hamid and Senussi, and which was unquestionably responsible in part for the failure of Turkey to rise to her responsibilities as the leading nation of modern Islam. But men who looked on Stamboul with suspicion might well regard Angora with open horror ; if the orthodoxy of the well-groomed Turkish *effendiya* of the Victorian era could be questioned, what might be said of the Nationalists ? The orthodoxy of the Wahabis, on the other hand, could hardly be seriously questioned. It was in over-emphasis rather than in lukewarmness that their weaknesses might be said to lie. There could be little doubt of the sincerity of the warmth with which the Wahabis as conquerors were received in Islam as a whole ; their violence

and intolerance compromised them to some extent, but their enthusiasm and their success brought new life and new inspiration ; for their conquests seemed to prove to Muslims, deparing of the position of the faith, that it was still possible for a Muslim monarch to rise to the heights " without (to paraphrase a famous remark) relying on the help of friendly Powers."

But Ibn Sa'ud was not content to rest with mere military conquest. A thoroughly practical politician, he realised that there were distinct limits to the possibility of expansion with so crude and unpopular a weapon. A keen student of Arab history, he saw that the realm he had created with so much labour must inevitably go to pieces once his own hand were removed unless some organisation could be created to hold the loyalty of the bedouin. Hence the institution of the *Akhwan* or " Brothers," a new religious freemasonry on lines so familiar in Islam, but preaching the puritan doctrines of the Wahabis. Like the Senussi, Ibn Sa'ud realised that spiritual doctrine without bread is of little use, and that the loyalty of the bedouin could only be permanently gained by something materially advantageous and solid enough to win it. By handing over his conquered oases to colonies of Akhwan, and founding new settlements wherever water could be located, Ibn Sa'ud laid a foundation throughout his vast dominions consisting of bodies of loyal supporters, whose daily bread as well as faith were bound up with his success ; and as the members of the colonies were drawn from many tribes, the old tribal allegiance was cut into, and a new allegiance substituted. The movement formed, in fact, a practical modern adaptation of the policy of the Prophet himself. But it is perhaps outside the boundaries of Arabia that the idea offers most possibilities. Ibn Sa'ud is now the ruler of most of the home country, but he is also something more ; he is Imam of the Wahabis and as such the titular head of the Akhwan. And members of the brotherhood are now to be found far beyond the bounds of Wahabi-land, in the bazaars of Baghdad and Damascus, among the tribes of Palestine, in Egypt, North Africa and even India. Any Muslim resident anywhere may join the brotherhood, provided he is ready to accept its teachings ;

and the institution shows Ibn Sa'ud in a new light, as attempting to place himself at the head of a religious revival which might have far greater consequences than any that his local conquests in Arabia could bring about. His occupation of Mecca presented him with a powerful additional lever in the work ; and he showed himself not insensible to its use by his invitation, in 1927, to a kind of pan-Islamic congress, in which all questions relating to the common welfare of Islam might be discussed by delegates from all over the Muslim world, for whom the incidence of the pilgrimage made it a convenient time to visit the holy city. The congress followed directly upon another convened by the *ulema* of Cairo to discuss the question of the caliphate ; and it was openly suggested in many quarters at the time that Ibn Sa'ud would seize the occasion to announce his own assumption of the supreme title. But the Wahabi monarch is free both of the vanity and the political incapacity of the Sharifian family ; for him facts are facts, and the acceptance of the highest honour must follow, not precede, the gaining of the acknowledged leading place in the community. That his own Meccan congress was a comparative failure has probably not interfered in his own mind with the steady pursuit of his ambition ; but it was interesting as showing the lines on which his thoughts were working and as offering a possible solution to the regrettable but unquestionable muddle in which the Muslim world as a whole now finds itself.¹

Of the post-war movements outside Arabia, that of Abdul Karim in Morocco, though dramatic, held little significance for the Arab world as a whole, though the excited enthusiasm with which it was followed by the Arabic press showed that the underlying unity of the Arab countries is still strong enough to resist the many foreign influences to which it is subjected in modern times. Of far greater significance was the almost simultaneous rebellion in Syria, which at one time strained the French resources so severely that the evacuation of the country was publicly discussed in the French press. The origin of the move-

¹ For the proceedings at the two Congresses, see : Achille Sekaly, " *Les Deux Congrès Musulmans de 1926* " ; Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1926.

ment was far from obscure.¹ Trouble had been continuous in Syria in one district or another ever since the war. The disappointment over the peace settlement, dissatisfaction with the French administration, dislike of the partition of the country and of an ill-judged attempt to "Latinize" the people by means of a subsidised press gained the support of the educated classes for the numerous little rebellious groups which were bound, in a country so faction-ridden as Syria, to have given trouble of some kind to the French in any case. As a consequence, the French lacked from the first the opportunity for co-operation with experienced natives of the educated classes which would have been invaluable in the far from easy task they had set themselves. Moreover, realising that the condition of her post-war finances would not permit her to retain heavy forces in Syria, France cut down her commitments to the utmost, and set to work to make Syria self-supporting as early as possible. But Syria, weakened by nearly ten years of war (for the economic life of the country had been constantly interrupted from the opening of the Turco-Italian war onwards), was in no position to finance the maintenance of an army of occupation, as well as of a new administration which was far more costly than that of the Turks. Not only did the French embark on large schemes of material improvement in roads, public works and so on—most of which were confined, however, to the Lebanon—but their pet system of divided State governments inevitably brought with it a rise in administrative working costs; and there was more than a suspicion that considerable sums of Government money were spent in "propaganda," the only visible results of which to the public were the subsidising of certain newspapers whose value either as news-sheets or as French organs was very dubious. Two serious economic blows which the new Syria had to meet were the loss of her neighbouring markets by the artificial boundaries brought about by the peace treaty, and the linking-up of her coinage with the depreciating French franc. Before the war Syria and

¹ For frank French discussion of the Syrian problem, see: Pierre la Mazière, "Partant pour la Syrie," Paris, 1926; Jérôme & Jean Tharaud, "Le Chemin de Damas," Paris, 1925.

Palestine had formed part of one empire, as had Irak also, and numerous trading interests had either markets or purchasing centres for raw materials in the other Arabic-speaking provinces which were now, under the new political arrangements, closed to them. In the north the large city of Aleppo found herself entirely cut off from the districts of Anatolia in which she not only sold her goods, but purchased her food ; for they now lay across the inaccessible Turkish border, having been returned by France (without the permission of the League of Nations, in whose name she nominally held the mandate over them) to Angora as part of the Franklin Bouillon Agreement of 1922. More serious to Syria as a whole was the effect of the new coinage of the Syrian pound which replaced the Egyptian coinage introduced by the British army of occupation. The new currency was exchangeable for francs in Paris at a fixed rate ; and consequently the fall in the franc which brought the " tied " Syrian pound down with it, made commerce with European countries impossible, and even with other Arab countries extremely difficult. The French object was obvious, and was achievable even more easily with a depreciated franc currency than under normal conditions ; since the harder it was for the Syrian importer to trade with other countries, the more he would be compelled to order from French sources. But the system defeated itself, in the general impoverishment of the country and the evil political results which it materially helped to bring about. The great commercial cities of Damascus, Aleppo and Beirut, which even under the Turks had enjoyed considerable prosperity as entrepôts for Irak and Arabia, now found themselves cut off from their markets and forced to trade in an artificially depreciated currency. Thus the loyalty of just those classes who form not infrequently the backbone of European administration in an eastern country was definitely forfeited. To crown all, the general situation on the border and in remote parts of the country remained so continuously unsettled that the French did not dare to remove the usual war-time controls, and many vexatious regulations, including the universal carrying of passports, continued in general use months and even years after they

had been abolished in Palestine and Irak. The character and methods of the police too, were open to the gravest objections, as were certain of the French social innovations—particularly the military *maisons tolérées*—which gravely shocked local opinion.¹ Local travel, owing to the subdivision of Syria and the passport regulations, became an intolerable burden; even five years after the armistice both trains and automobiles were stopped at the borders of each of the little States into which Syria was now divided, and the passengers subjected to severe interrogation. Lastly, in the realm of broad policy, the French made an initial mistake in visualising themselves as the missionaries of Latin civilisation in a barbarous oriental country. It was the old mistake of German “Kultur” again, on a smaller stage. But modern Syria, wild and backward as are many of its districts, possesses in its cultivated areas a settled and civilised population which is well fitted to bear comparison with Europe itself. It is in fact the only Arab culture to retain something of the old greatness—since that of Egypt is in many respects cosmopolitan—and the only Arab country whose sons have for generations gone forth into the world, to Cairo, to New York, to Manchester, to Sydney, to Marseilles, and carved out careers for themselves which justified their being accepted without question as the social equals of their neighbours. Even Lord Cromer, whom no one would accuse of showing prejudice in his judgments on behalf of the “native,” gave it as his opinion that the Syrian gentleman is in every respect the equal of the European.² Syria in fact socially resembles less an oriental country than an undeveloped tract of the New World; with large areas of “the wild,” but having cities and cultivated areas in enjoyment of all the comforts and educational opportunities associated with modern life everywhere. Such a country was the very last place to attempt the introduction of a foreign “Kultur” by force, particularly when the force rested on no legal basis (for France herself did not conquer Syria, and was merely in

¹ And also French opinion. See the grim little satire headed, “Intermezzo,” in “*Partant pour la Syrie*,” noted above (p. 147).

² Lord Cromer: “*Modern Egypt*,” Vol. II, p. 218.

possession of a mandate from the League), and was shrewdly suspected to be not unconnected with the imperialistic ideas of a great Church. Strange as it may seem to us in Europe, who have racially such short memories, it is yet a fact that the Syrians have never forgotten the Crusades and the havoc which they wrought ; nor have they anything but a cynical regard for European intentions, for their history since Roman times has taught them that European occupation, however disguised, means in practice the oyster for the occupying power and the shell for the native. A mandate to the United States they would have accepted gladly ; a mandate to Britain they would have received unprotestingly, particularly as the British retained control of all the adjoining Arab countries. But France was a different proposition. The Crusades had been mainly made in France, and now France had returned—did she not say so herself?—in the rôle of a neo-crusader, anxious to turn Syria into a province of Greater France, to abolish the Arab language in favour of French, to substitute Parisian manners for native customs dating back thousands of years ; possibly—who knows?—to drive out the barbarous Islamic religion and put in its place Roman Catholicism or modern free thought. Lest it be thought that the influence of such ideas on Syrian minds is exaggerated, it may be pointed out that even a staunch Catholic like General Weygand recognised the importance of keeping the religious issue sternly in the background ; and under General Weygand, Syria enjoyed, for a brief space, peace and reasonable progress. The arrival of General Sarrail, a man of very marked “ modernist ” views, anti-clerical and anti-traditional, set the spark to a flame which had long been smouldering. Of all the several provinces, that of the Jebel Druse had been the lightest used by the French authorities. It had in fact more or less ruled itself, subject to the guiding hand of a tactful and gifted French officer who had won universal respect and even affection. Unfortunately, early in 1925 this officer left the country on leave, and his place was taken by an official who offended local susceptibilities on various counts. Certain highly placed Druse shaikhs, whose position among their own countryfolk is almost royal,

decided to go to Beirut in person to interview the High Commissioner and request a change. Syrians are still orientals in their love of old-world courtesy and formality, but eastern courtesy, though perhaps tedious to the modern western man, after all costs nothing and is easily given.¹ General Sarraïl refused it. After keeping the delegation waiting for three days, he omitted even to receive them personally, and requested them to state their complaints to a member of his staff. Such an insult even the Turks would not have dared to offer, and the Druse princes returned to Damascus boiling with indignation. Their grievances were freely shared, and almost without notice the French found themselves face to face with a serious rebellion, in which Druse and orthodox Muslim for once joined hands, and even local Christian bodies were suspected of active sympathy. French local forces were quite insufficient for anything like a campaign on the grand scale, and the Government was heavily involved at the time with Abdul Karim in Morocco. The French public, struggling to recover from the effects of the world war, was in a "defeatist" humour, and clamoured loudly for the abandonment of the Syrian mandate and the concentration of national effort against the Riffis. French governing circles, disappointed both with the reception of the French mandate by the Syrians, and the poor chances which seemed to be offered to French penetration, were inclining towards a similar point of view. The local French administration found itself between the devil and the deep sea, and, not unnaturally, lost its head. A policy of "ruthlessness" was decided upon; Damascus, a defenceless open city, was suddenly and without warning subjected to a forty-eight hours' bombardment from French guns on the hills outside; compensation for killed or injured individuals or for loss of property caused by this barbaric action was absolutely refused; and by the way of further "frightfulness," the old Turkish system of hanging condemned rebels on gibbets exposed at the tramway-centre in Damascus was

¹ "The whole rebellion," said a well-informed European resident of Beirut to the writer, "could have been stopped for the price of half-a-dozen cups of coffee."

revived. This conduct raised a storm of protest throughout the world, and brought about such a reaction in Paris that General Sarrail was recalled. A new civilian High Commissioner arrived with a new policy which combined adequate military preparation for the quelling of the rebellion with a definite holding out of the olive branch to genuine native opinion. This was undoubtedly the right policy for the moment, and by its means the trouble was gradually brought under and normal conditions restored.

But under the surface the unrest still continued. The difficulties in the way of a permanent accommodation were, in fact, almost insurmountable. The French had committed themselves to administrative policies which cut straight across native prejudices and feelings, and they could hardly hope to conciliate the latter without withdrawing almost the whole of their original programme. But such a *volte-face* would involve a confession of failure which no first-class power could be expected to make except under the sternest pressure. Perhaps the way through the clouds was best indicated by the statement of the Mandates Commission of the League, which, while expressing disapproval in no uncertain terms of past French mistakes in Syria, took official note of the declared French intention to facilitate the rise of the country to self-governing independence within the shortest possible time, and recommended the nationalist leaders to let bygones be bygones, and to substitute intelligent and willing co-operation for obstruction and intrigue.

If Palestine and Egypt have shown less actually turbulent activity than Syria, it has not been, unfortunately, from the lack of ill-feeling. In Palestine, as in Syria, the initial fault lay with the mandatory power. Palestine has never come within the scope of the nationalist Arabs, who have always frankly realized that the holy land of three religions would be compelled, by the general opinion of the modern world, to accept finally some sort of unique international control. If the British on entering the country had chosen to rule in the detached and impartial way that they have ruled India, there is nothing to show that the country would not have settled down to a period of peace and prosperity unequalled

in its long and stormy history. It might then have amply repaid Britain, both on economic and political grounds, for the responsibility of guarding it. But the official encouragement given by the Balfour Declaration to the Zionist conception of a national home for the Jews was a political bomb, the repercussions of which may yet have far-reaching, and almost certainly disastrous, results. It may be said with truth that religion, in its political significance, is the curse of Palestine. The divisions caused among the inhabitants by the various faiths and sects, the perpetual efforts of all of them to attract recruits from each other, keep up a continual social ferment which forms the worst possible foundation for hopes of orderly progress. Few countries are more overrun with mendicants, cranks and humbugs. Deliberately to add to the confusion by introducing a new bone of contention is a political action unworthy of a great Government. No doubt the fault was committed partly in error. Palestine was little known in the West before the war, and in the enthusiasm of the British conquest it was easily assumed that it was a sparsely-populated country in which Jewish immigration might comfortably be encouraged, and the reproach of the unpaid debt which the modern world feels that it owes to the Jews thus be removed. Conceived as such, the Balfour Declaration was a brilliant and a noble idea, whose only fault was that it bore no relation to actual facts. In practice, it is unfair both to Arab and Jew. It has alienated the native population who, after all, seeing that Palestine is first and foremost their own country, and that they welcomed the British into it by such means as they possessed, have a right to the consideration and the protection of the British Government ; and it has led the Jews to see visions and to dream dreams which even the Zionist leaders themselves now realize to be unattainable. It has been stated in some quarters that the object behind the Balfour Declaration was not idealistic but (from the British point of view) strictly practical ; that, in view of the uncertain attitude of Egypt, it was important for England to secure a base near the Suez Canal, and that the Jews offered more tractable material than the Arabs for the creation of a local British protectorate. Such a view, if it

ever carried weight in responsible British quarters, shows a complete misreading of history. The Jews have twice had the opportunity of retaining Palestine as a kind of fief of an Imperial power, and on each occasion they have given so much trouble that in the first case they had to be transported to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and in the second to be practically exterminated by the Romans. There are many ways of adequately safeguarding the British control of the Suez Canal, and to trust to an artificial Jewish connection is surely one of the poorest. And in any case it must be reiterated that the first duty of Great Britain, seeing that she does not own Palestine but merely holds it in fief for the world, is towards the local population. The Jews in the country (after a decade of immigration) only number one-fifth of the settled population ; the other four-fifths are irrevocably opposed to them. In addition, there are the bedouin tribes, who would hardly be likely to be pro-Zionist. Yet the British Government is committed to support the one-fifth against the four-fifths, in defiance not only of the principles which brought the mandate system into being but of the democratic political theories upon which the whole modern world is built up. It is true that the Balfour Declaration itself specifically lays it down that the establishment of the National Home for the Jews should not " prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine " ; but it omitted (not unnaturally) to explain how it expected two such opposite aims to be harmonized. The success of a Jewish National Home must obviously prejudice the interests of the native inhabitant, for it obviously must coincide with the complete control of the country ; equally obviously, native success in keeping the Jews at bay must mean the eventual failure of the scheme, since (unless a special small State were carved out of Palestine for them), the Zionists could never safely consent to remain an unpopular minority. The net result has been a grave aggravation of the disease of religious faction, which it should have been the British Government's first object to assuage. An unfortunate small country is saddled with three official languages and an autocratic administration which dare not introduce representative

institutions because the central pivot of its policy is known to be generally disliked by its subjects. A more distressing example of "self-determination" could, surely, hardly be found. And from the purely British point of view, the experiment suggests most dangerous consequences. Britain has hitherto ruled in India and other parts of the East by a deliberate policy of scrupulous non-interference with local groups or factions, which has made her rule acceptable even to native elements which may dislike it. Once allow it to be thought that the *Raj* is descending to favouritism and the great structure of the Government of India disappears overnight. In Palestine, for the first time, the British Government has entered an eastern country with a deliberate policy of favouritism for one of the three major religious communities of which a varied population is made up. It is a dangerous novelty in British policy, and one which, having in view the backwardness and consequent weakness of the local population, seems on the face of it hardly "cricket." And if we are right in believing it to be a bad political mistake, we can never overlook the fact that political mistakes, like all human errors, have to be paid for. Unfortunately the bill in this case will not be met by the framers of the Balfour Declaration and their Jewish friends in high quarters in London and New York but by the unfortunate inhabitants of Palestine and, in emergency, by the ordinary British Tommy and the ordinary British taxpayer.

With Egypt, too, the relations of Great Britain remain indeterminate and unsatisfactory. Successful in gaining her technical freedom from the British Empire, Egypt can hardly be said to have made the most of her political opportunities ; her local politics are reminiscent of the pre-war Balkans, and her leaders, with very few exceptions, show little sense of balance ; a strange fault, perhaps, in a country where tact and a cool head are the most valuable of all political qualities. The British, on the other hand, have scarcely shown Egypt the sympathy which her war-time record and her political inexperience deserved. There has been a tendency to bitterness, verging at times on abuse, noticeable in the English press, and a regrettable decay among British officials of the spirit inculcated by Lord

Cromer, of ruling Egypt for Egypt's good. The increasing hardness in tone of English public life since the war tends to make her press and public men less idealistic and more "practical"; the vision of the white man's burden has been superseded by the more businesslike question—where do we come in? Both England and Egypt have tended to be seen at their worst in recent collisions; in the crisis which followed the infamous murder of Sir Lee Stack Pasha in 1924, for example, the Egyptian Courts charged with the trial of the accused persons showed up so badly that an English judge of great local eminence was compelled to resign as a protest; and the British Government, on the other hand, made almost indecent use of the tragic death of a great public man to press home on Egypt its Sudan demands, the equity of which (in view of the money and men which Egypt has expended in that country in the last forty years) is not exactly clear. Attempts made by Egypt to have her case reviewed by the League of Nations have always been frustrated by the British Government—in itself hardly a good advertisement of the justice of the present British position,

Of the other North African Arab lands, little need be said. Tunis and Algeria continue quiet and progressive. There is a certain demand in both countries for a larger measure of self-government and local control, a demand which will probably have to be met eventually by the French. Apart from this, there is no evidence of dissatisfaction with the French connection, which has not only brought prosperity to the provinces themselves, but has secured for talented North Africans careers in Europe to which they could not otherwise have aspired. If the Algerians and Tunisians show less ambition in the political sphere than the Egyptians, they have perhaps something to teach their neighbours in the matter of ready adaptation to modern conditions and a practical determination to make the best of things as they are.

In Tripoli and Cyrenaica the post-war years have seen the gradual consolidation of Italian power, culminating in the transfer from Egypt of the oasis of Jarabub, the old stronghold of the Senussi. The sea-board of the provinces

is being colonized to some extent by Italians, and there is little evidence of legitimate native opposition to the administration of the interior. As these countries have never enjoyed much importance of their own, but have always served mainly as a corridor between Egypt and western North Africa, it seems hardly likely that their occupation can be very profitable to Italy ; and the difficulty of adequately guarding the inner oases seems to guarantee the historic freedom of the bedouin. There is no question here of those " nationalist " movements arising which form the basis of political disagreement in the more settled and civilized Arab lands.

With the small states of the Arabian coast, Great Britain has consolidated her position to the extent of being the virtual mistress of all of them except the Yemen, where the Imam has been busily increasing his effective range ever since the war. Always anti-British, he has turned for European co-operation to the Italians, his old allies of pre-war days ; and though the economic situation of the Yemen has decayed of late years, he is still powerful enough to rank easily second to Ibn Sa'ud among unmandated Arab potentates. So far, the two have not yet tried conclusions with each other, although the possibility of a campaign against the Imam (who, as a Zaidite Shiah, is regarded as a heretic by the Wahabis) has been considered more than once by Ibn Sa'ud. The Imam's control of the sea-board, the difficult nature of his mountainous country, and his powerful Italian friends, make him, however, a dangerous enemy to tackle.

Such, then, is the latest Arab world ; three kings, of whom one, Ibn Sa'ud, is independent and two (Faisal of Irak and Fuad of Egypt) are under British veiled protection ; a number of small independent princes, of whom all but the Imam of San'a are so closely attached to Great Britain by treaty relations as to be practically British dependencies ; two " mandated provinces," one (Palestine) attached to Great Britain and the other (Syria) to France ; two regencies (Morocco and Tunis), both—with the exception of the Spanish colonies in Morocco, and the internationally controlled city of Tangier—attached to France ; and two

actual European colonies, of which Algeria is French and Libya (containing Tripoli and Cyrenaica) Italian. There is no other example of so large a portion of the earth's surface, populated by people of the same language (with small local exceptions), the same religion and the same customs, having been carved up by the various European powers in so successful and thorough a fashion. But under everything, across all the divisions, beneath the veneer of European control and transplanted western civilization, there still goes on the same life, the same hopes, the same prayers, the same outlook which has made Fez a copy of Mecca and the Riffi tribesman a recognizable cousin of the Iraki bedouin. The strange and compelling unity of Arab Islam has survived the corruption and incompetence of its own rulers, the attacks of Crusaders and Spaniards, the misrule of the Ottoman Turks ; it may yet survive the ambitions of modern Europe.

CHAPTER XV

RELIGION AND THE ARABS

THERE is one feature of the foregoing narrative which the reader can hardly fail to have noticed : the prominence of the part played by religion. Just as the political structure of the original Arab empire was reared on the first successes of Islam, so even to-day his political and social ideals are inevitably bound up with an Islamic point of view. There are educated Arab free-thinkers to-day by the score ; but they are free-thinkers within the Islamic framework, betraying even in their free-thinking a Muslim bias. If it be proverbially true that prophets are left unhonoured by their own people, it is a truth that has no application to Muhammad. The Prophet's life, his teaching, his example are ever before his people, in the twentieth century as in the seventh. To recall, in the course of a conversation, a tradition of the Prophet relevant to the subject being discussed is still a mark of the highest culture in Arab society. For the Prophet is, under God, the founder and focal point of the saving faith ; an Arab will neglect and even scoff at his religion, but he will never disregard it.

The reason for this lies deep down in the very nature of the man. The Arab is a Semite like the Jew, and there is in the Semitic nature a crying need for religion, not as a thing apart from this world, a thing to be sought in trouble and cultivated in old age, but as a necessary part of everyday existence. In a word, the Semite is a religious man before everything else, in the sense that his particular religious belief is always before and with him in every action of life. But he is not, necessarily (paradoxical though it may seem) either a very good or a very moral man ; his standards are frequently, judged by modern views, distinctly low. Nor is he necessarily deeply religious, in the sense

that we use the term in the West ; sensitive people who feel deeply do not as a rule wear their hearts upon their sleeves. But the Semite, even when slack or lukewarm in his observances of his faith, retains a certain passionate loyalty towards it which still continues to permeate his actions ; just as a bad Englishman may still be a sincere lover of England. And yet as we regard law, art and literature as essentially national productions and affairs, so does the Semite regard them as essentially religious. It is for this reason that the Jew has been able to make himself comfortable in every country in the world, and yet remain always a Jew ; he takes his religion with him, and to him his religion is his country and his home.

Thus the Arab, like the Jew, is essentially a man of a religion. From Islam he derived his power, his empire, his prestige ; through Islam he is still able to impress his personality upon a great part of the world. The saving faith is the rock on which he has built his whole social system, the glass which colours his opinion of the outside world, the daily ward of his inmost thoughts and desires. An Arab may be a bad Muslim, but he is always a Muslim. There are Arab Christians, just as there are Jewish Christians ; but they are mere unfortunates, cut off from the main stream of their national life, loudly self-conscious minorities drifting dangerously near the wretched human status of half-castes. To all intents and purposes, Islam and Arabism are identical ; it may possibly not be so in the future, but it is still so to-day. "The nations are dropping away from Islam," sadly remarked an Arab friend to the present writer one day, when discussing the Turkish situation, "and the day may yet come when the Arabs alone will remain. They will always be Muslims ; for to them the saving faith was first revealed." The Prophet was an Arab of the Arabs, and the original Islam, before it was hidden beneath the mass of theological formulæ which were largely the work of Persian, Greek and Syrian converts, was merely the worship of God in an Arab dress. It is therefore difficult if not impossible to dissociate the Arabs from Islam, for the reason that Arab ideals and Islamic ideals are, to all intents and purposes, one and the same thing.

What is this faith which nerved its first adherents to conquer half the world in two generations, and still even in its decay successfully resists the advance of all thought that it regards as alien to itself?

The essential elements of Islam are simplicity itself. The faith is, as a British army text-book tersely but aptly puts it, "pure theism." There is no god but God, and Muhammad, as the founder and head of the faith, is the prophet of God. (The Shiahs, who are unrepresentative both in beliefs and intellectual processes, add a third article of belief: that Ali and his family (that is, the Shiah Imams), are the Intimates of God.) This is the whole creed of Islam, and its recital in the presence of duly authorized witnesses automatically makes a man a Muslim. There are no sacraments and no priests, and consequently no form of sacramental initiation such as baptism. Furthermore, there is no power to remove any person from the body of the faith; however heretical his views, he is still a Muslim if he is loyally able to recite the formula. It follows that heretics in Islam are very difficult to deal with, which is one of the reasons for the very large number of sects into which the faith has, at one time or another, been divided. "My people will be divided into seventy-two bodies," runs a well-known tradition of the Prophet, "of which one only will escape hell fire." This spurious quotation has, as might be expected, been freely used as an argumentative weapon by each and all of the sects against the others.

The admirable simplicity of fundamental belief, which distinguishes Islam from all other religions, is seconded by an equal simplicity of spiritual practice. There being neither priests nor sacraments, there can be no question of consecration, as the term is understood in Christendom; the earth is the Lord's, and one place is as good as another for the purpose of saying one's devotions to Him. Hence the mosques—divided into *jama'a* or congregational buildings in which the Friday congregational service is held, and *mesjid* or worshipping shrines for the daily prayers—are not consecrated temples or churches but places of assembly. It follows that there is nothing irreverent in associating a mosque with secular buildings of a public character, for in

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Islam the division between religious and secular is not presumed to exist. Hence among the Arabs the mosques, in addition to their religious uses, have always acted as public meeting-places, schools, libraries, centres of arts and crafts, homes for the homeless and even as courts of law and offices for government officials. For this reason the principal mosques are always placed in the middle of bazaars or other central places, which sadly compromises them architecturally, but emphasizes the real, intimate part they are intended to play in the daily life of the people. In the mosques are said the five (for the Shiah three) daily prayers, which have become so familiar to the West owing to the set nature of the physical prostrations which accompany them. The prayers are not private requests or confessions (private prayer is open to the Muslim at any time, in the mosque or in his own home), but form the ritual service of the religion. How and when they assumed their present form is not known ; there are no detailed directions regarding them in the Koran, and they may have been, and possibly were, elaborated after the Prophet's death. The prayers consist mainly of an acknowledgment of God's glory and mercy, in which the celebrated *Fatihah* or opening chapter of the Koran plays a part, together with prayers for the Prophet and the people of the Prophet. (The latter are often cited by modern Muslims as expressive of the "humble" attitude of Muslims towards God, as compared with the "arrogance" of Christians ; for the Christians, they say, pray *by* or *through* Christ, whereas Muslims pray *for* Muhammad.) The symbolism of the various prostrations is that of man in dependence on God in every position in life, sitting, standing or kneeling. The ritual prayers should always be said where possible in a mosque (a rule not enforced among the Shiahs) and in congregation, and they must be said at or near certain times of the day, dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and evening. An additional prayer-time—midnight—is commended but not compulsory. The prayer-times in the cities are announced by the *muedhin* or caller to prayer of the mosque ; in the country or desert, or during a halt on a journey, the person chosen to lead the prayers usually acts as the caller. The leader of the congregation is termed the

imam ; any Muslim of responsible age and good character may act as imam with the assent of his fellow worshippers, but in the cities the imam is usually a paid official of the mosque. As leadership in prayer is held in Islam (following the example of the Prophet himself) to imply leadership in the community, important persons, such as ruling monarchs, princes and so on are expected when present in a mosque to exercise the office. To avoid the burden of this duty, and the inconvenience of mixing familiarly with the general public, the aristocracy of Muslim countries usually have a private chapel in their houses ; but the Caliphs and Sultans have always as a rule been careful to make a public appearance in the mosques at least once a week—usually leading the Friday service, at which it was customary in olden times for the Caliph to deliver the *khutbah* or address. In this Friday service the customary daily ritual is shortened, to make room for the *khutbah*—or rather for the two *khutbahs*, for two addresses are delivered standing, between which the *khatib* or deliverer sits down—a remnant, probably, of pre-Islamic Arab practice. Part of the *khutbah* consists of a prayer for the community, in which is included a prayer for the ruler ; it has been the cause of much competition throughout Islamic history, because mention in it by name naturally bestowed legality upon the title of the monarch. In modern times the system has caused embarrassment to Muslim authorities in non-Muslim countries, it being considered illegal to insert the name of a non-Muslim. Thus in India for many years the prayer in the *khutbah* was recited on behalf of the Sultan of Turkey, as Caliph of Islam, although the worshippers were actually subjects of the King of England.

In addition to the recital of the creed and the ritual prayers, the compulsory duties of Islam are three : almsgiving according to a certain standard laid down (voluntary almsgiving in addition being commendable) ; fasting for one month in the lunar year ; and pilgrimage to Mecca (the *haj*) at least once in a lifetime, provided financial means allow of it. The official almsgiving formed in the early days of the Arab Empire the government taxation system ; a Muslim could not, in fact, be taxed in any other way.

But in this particular sphere the theory of the Church and State as one, which is such a characteristic feature of Islam, broke down quite early, and the sphere of the *zakat* was gradually narrowed down to a compulsory donation towards pious objects, the rebuilding of mosques, the opening of schools and hospitals, and so on. Finally it disappeared altogether as a compulsory obligation, and in modern times is left (except with the Wahabis) to the conscience of each individual. The fasting month is the ninth in the Arabic lunar calendar, known as Ramadhan "the Blessed" (*Al-Mubarak*)¹; fasting is compulsory on all grown Muslims from sunrise to sunset, the prohibition including, in addition to food, drink, tobacco and the company of the other sex. The ordinary indulgences are permitted after sunset, and owing to the animation in the bazaars, coffee-shops and so on in the evenings of Ramadhan, it tends to become in some respects a month of noticeable gaiety; this is not, however, encouraged by the strictly orthodox, who prefer to spend the leisure hours of the month in prayer, study and meditation. Some wealthy houses engage a Koran-reader for the month, and invite their relatives and friends to a recital of the Book, the whole of which will be read in the course of the month; many of the poorer classes spend each evening of the month in the mosques.

The original unity of Church and State led naturally to the consideration of all law as having its source in religion—a characteristically Semitic idea. Based on the dual career of Muhammad himself, it still theoretically holds good; though in modern practice the entirely stationary nature of Muslim law (legislation stopped, according to the orthodox view, with the passing of the Prophet, and the law has ever since been concerned only with interpretation) has led to the growth in modern Muslim countries of a dual system, civil and criminal cases being dealt with by civil courts of the ordinary pattern, and questions of personal status, marriage, inheritance and so on by the religious courts, as of old. The head religious magistrate is called the *kadi*, and his

¹ Several of the Arabic months have adjectival epithets, which it is customary to couple with their names in literature, and even (among the pedantic) in conversation.

decisions are accepted by the civil power as binding in his own sphere. There is also a higher-grade judge, really a kind of canon lawyer, known as a *mufti*,¹ whose function is to issue legal decisions (*fatwas*) in difficult cases, on application being made to him either by magistrates or private persons ; these decisions must be based on orthodox precedent and on the practice of previous *muftis*, and not on the private judgment of the *mufti* pronouncing them. The sources of original authority are regarded as four : the Koran ; the Traditions of the Prophet, of which only certain collections are accepted as orthodox ; the universal agreement (*ijma*) of the Muslim community (founded on a celebrated Tradition which says " My people shall never agree together in an error ") ; and *kiyas* or analogy from the other three. The sources were collected and organized in the ninth century by four (originally six) great legalists, to one of whose schools every orthodox Muslim belongs. Shiahs enjoy more elasticity in legal matters, for they recognize nothing but the *fatwas* of their own *mujtahids*, who take the place with them of the orthodox *muftis*, but have much more liberty of action.

It will thus be seen that Islam, in original theory a most simple faith, has through the centuries become extremely complicated ; on the pure theism of Muhammad has been raised a superstructure of elaborate codes and beliefs as rigid and unbending as those of the Jews. This is due partly to the want of co-ordination of much of the Prophet's own teaching, for Muhammad had not the time, even if he possessed the inclination, to become a systematic theologian ; partly to the almost primitive simplicity of the earlier faith which, though admirable in theory, tended to break down completely before the requirements of a more complicated civilization. Muhammad had seen the evils wrought by priestcraft, and sought to counter it by abolishing the priest and his ceremonies altogether and by bringing the individual worshipper into direct relation with the Object of worship ; a keen believer in the power of right instinct, he tried to democratize religion by giving every man a hand

¹ The loose-fitting garments usually worn by Muftis suggested the incorporation of the word into the English language in quite another significance.

in it. He could not foresee that in a more complicated society instincts would become blunted, and a more professional organization become urgently necessary to keep the framework together. He abolished the priest, but could not prevent the canon lawyer appearing in his place ; and the canon lawyer is the curse of Islam. Priest-rule is pernicious, but rule by lawyers is infinitely worse ; the priest may retain his heart and his humanity, but the lawyer becomes more and more an abstract principle. Hence the heartless and formalistic dry-rot which has been so deadly an enemy to Islamic progress, and which makes the average *mullah* so reminiscent of the New Testament scribes and pharisees.

In sympathy with the simple directness of his religious teaching, the social theory inculcated by the Prophet was democratic and unadorned. Islam was a brotherhood, rigid without but comprehensive within. In a mosque the head of the community must claim no higher privilege than to lead the community in prayer ; wealth and position were things to be enjoyed but also to be shared. Family responsibilities were to be accepted joyfully ; polygamy and divorce were allowable, but the economic position of the woman must be safeguarded. Brotherly love, one of the greatest of the virtues within Islam, stopped short at its boundaries ; certain religions were to be officially tolerated as " people of a Book " or revelation of their own, Christians, Jews and Sabians ; but a Muslim must never forget that a *kafir* or unbeliever could acquire no merit in the sight of God, however pure his intentions and moral his life. *Kifr* (unbelief) and *shirk* (the association of other gods with God), these were the deadly sins ; others might be pardoned, these never. From this curiously mixed doctrine of tolerance and abhorrence has sprung the uncertain attitude of Islam towards other faiths, which has often perplexed those whose dealings have lain with Muslims. It is a mistake to regard Islam as politically intolerant ; its record in this respect is much better than that of Christianity. In all mixed countries where a Christian population has gained the upper hand—Spain, Sicily, Greece, Crete or Malta—the Muslims have always in course of time been either exterminated or driven out ; in Muslim countries the Christian

minorities, though despised, have been permitted to remain up to the present day. The Jews, who have had colonies in both Muslim and Christian countries since very early days, have been on the whole far better treated by Muslims than by Christians; and in the middle ages they found a ready home with the Turk from the barbarities and terrors of Christian Spain.¹ The modern fanaticism of Muslim countries, notably Turkey, towards its Christian subjects has been due entirely to the well-founded suspicion that they were intriguing against the State with various European powers. Yet, though it could truthfully be said that Islam's record on the score of tolerance is a high one, there is a sense in which, intellectually, it is the most intolerant of all religions. Owing to the stress which it lays upon ritual cleanliness—for every Muslim must perform the so-called "lesser ablution" before prayer, and in the event of having polluted himself in certain natural ways, must bathe entirely,—it necessarily encourages the dislike of anything "unclean." An unbeliever—even a tolerated unbeliever—is technically unclean; being outside the pale and not capable of acquiring religious merit, he may be allowed to exist, but he ought to be avoided. It follows from this doctrine that friendship between Muslims and non-Muslims is extremely difficult, for it must always partake of the nature of patronage on the one side and sycophancy on the other. But even in this field it is difficult to convict Islam of worse intolerance than was the custom in Christendom five and even two hundred years ago. In considering all these questions, the supreme difficulty lies in the fact that the Christian outlook in these matters has entirely changed even within living memory, while Islam retains almost unchanged the rigid and primitive outlook of mediævalism. Moreover, a tendency towards erecting barriers not of caste or nation but rather of faith seems to be a characteristic of all Near Eastern peoples; it is strongly developed in the Jews, and is to be seen in some Eastern Christian sects; the Copts, for example, will not as a rule intermarry with other Christians.

¹ The Jews of Algiers still keep a curious little Feast in celebration of the "merciful" defeat of the Emperor Charles V. by the Turks, by which they were saved from falling into Christian (Spanish) hands.

In Islam, the policy of personal segregation is carried to its logical conclusion only by the Shiah, who frequently will not eat with non-Muslims, and sometimes dislike even touching them.¹ Modern life is, however, tending to break down this as all other barriers ; and the post-war years in particular, bringing the new inventions of the automobile, the aeroplane and the wireless, have seen much alteration in this respect. It is difficult even for the most rigid adherent of the old school to maintain a strictly correct attitude towards "unbelievers" in the course of a two or three days' motor journey across the open spaces of the desert. Just as the motor-car is forcing the Arabs to abandon certain of their picturesque garments, so it is compelling them to shed, or at least to conceal, their inherited intellectual dislike of the world outside the pale. At the same time, it must always be remembered that this attitude is in strict accordance with orthodox teaching, and while that teaching remains what it is, it must always remain a factor to be taken into account when dealing with Muslims. In course of time, no doubt, it will be whittled down, just as that intolerant document the Athanasian Creed is whittled down by modern Christians ; but at present it still remains a thing to be reckoned with.

Thus we see that it is not inaccurate to visualize Islam as a great brotherhood, with all the qualities and defects of that type of organization ; loyalty to the clan and kindness to the brother ; suspicion and hatred, either open or covert, of the world outside. It is this attitude which, in the realm of politics, accounts both for the extraordinary resistive power which Islam has against foreign "penetration," and also for the difficulty which non-Muslim governments experience in handling Muslim populations. It is a mistake to think that it is only Western Christian adminis-

¹ All Muslims, however, are averse to giving the *salaam* or greeting to non-Muslims, owing to the fact that the word "*salaam*,"—"peace," possesses a religious significance, as in the "Peace of God" prayed for in English churches. There are, as a rule, other forms of conventional address in use in Muslim countries with large Christian or Jewish populations, which are utilized to get out of the difficulty. Should a non-Muslim offer the *salaam* to a Muslim, the latter will not reply, but will evade or vary the greeting. Many Muslims, too, prefer not to drink water—owing to its special sentimental, almost sacramental, position in the parched Arab countries—in the company of, or in vessels used by, "infidel" acquaintances.

trations which suffer in this way; the expulsion of the Muslims of India has often been discussed by the Hindus owing to the aggressive and dangerous attitude of the former, and was at least once actually attempted, by the Mahratta empire of Poona ; and in China the Muslim minority has frequently given very serious trouble. One of the great difficulties of the Islamic outlook in politics is the serious conflict of loyalties which it entails, which, owing to the cosmopolitan character of its following, tend to make a man a Muslim first and a citizen of his own country only secondarily. The laws of the faith, being simple, easily understandable and yet absolutely rigid, draw a barrier between Muslim life and all other forms of social life which defeats even the activities of the latter-day nationalistic State. This is one of the reasons why Muslims have always shown such doubtful political judgment ; for they tend to put what they consider to be the interests of the faith before those of their country, sometimes with fatal results to the latter. Jews and Roman Catholics are often accused of the same weakness for a double allegiance, and it may in fact be a necessary weakness of any strong and rigid religion ; but it is a feature which has been displayed far more prominently by the followers of Muhammad. There are, however, many things to be noted on the credit side of this strong brotherhood feeling which must arouse genuine admiration. The kindness and courtesy in address between fellow-Muslims, the invariable but impressive code of manners, taught as a religious duty and making the coolie the equal of the pasha in politeness, thus cementing society and increasing the civic virtues ; the lively and intelligent interest taken by one part of the Muslim world in the doings of another ; the real kindness towards travellers and guests ; the charity towards the poor and unfortunate ; the lack of any colour bar ; the very real joy felt by Muslims in simple acts of brotherhood, such as attending public prayer in each other's company ; are all sincere and constant tributes to that astonishing social spirit which Islam displays so much more obviously than its sister religions. Christians, too, are nominally brothers ; yet an important event in, say, the Greek Church in Bulgaria would excite no more than a ripple

of interest in Rome, and would probably go unreported in London and New York. A Hindu attack on a mosque in Calcutta would be reported in the Cairo press the next day, and commented on in Teheran and Algiers within the week. Muslims have their quarrels ; owing possibly to its extreme simplicity, Islam is more sect-ridden than almost any other faith. But its divisions never quite get out of the realm of family affairs ; they may be fierce, but they become hushed at the appearance of the outsider. Perhaps, from the point of view of the faith itself, the most important quality of the brotherhood-feeling is its value as a cementing force ; converts from Islam to other religions are so scarce as to be negligible, and there is no case on record of a country or whole community abjuring the faith. On the contrary, alone among the so-called world religions, Islam continues to attract new recruits in large numbers, and this in spite of its resounding political failures. In sophisticated parts of the world, Europe, China, India or Japan, it makes little progress ; but in the wilder places, alike among white and black, Asiatic Russian or African negro, the teaching of the Prophet still continues to wield a great appeal. This success throws light on to another favourable quality of its great brotherhood spirit ; the burning desire to attract new converts. The preaching of the faith is a religious duty, not entrusted as in Christendom to paid professional workers, but shouldered joyfully by private individuals, travellers, business men, officials and even coolies, who regard it as their own little piece of service to the faith. This duty is, and always has been, most devotedly carried out. If Muslims be accused of intolerance towards the unbeliever, it must at least be conceded that they are ceaseless in their efforts for what they take to be his spiritual welfare. Not only is the door wide open to everyone who will but pronounce the creed with wholehearted acceptance ; not only are all the advantages of the community immediately at the disposal of the *kafir* if he will but become a Muslim ; but a ceaseless propaganda is maintained, in market place, lodging house or open road, to put before him the advantages of the saving faith. Such widespread and individual energy is almost unique in modern times in the purely

religious sphere ; that it should mark the following, not of some newly born sect or fashionable craze, but of an old religion which has been preached for fourteen hundred years and which can point, in the worldly sense, to little but failure, is hardly short of amazing.

It may be taken, then, that Islam still holds a message for millions of human beings, in the twentieth century as in the seventh. How comes it that a faith possessing such vitality and power has such a bad record to show on the material and political side of the balance sheet ?

Political Islam has indeed a dark picture to present. Though present day Muslims number many millions, in but few instances do they form the ruling population in the countries they inhabit. None of the three independent Muslim States still existing outside of Arabia itself—Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan—are of the first class, nor does the immediate future in any of them appear particularly rosy. The independence of Arabia itself is more nominal than real, since its outlets to the outside world are almost entirely in the hands of Great Britain. The rest of Islam has now been cut up between various European powers and the United States. Worse still, the progress of Muslim communities in “controlled” countries is, in spite of much advertisement, precarious and uncertain. It is a commonplace among Eastern travellers that in each country the Muslim community is, with brilliant exceptions, the most backward, the least adaptable and the least intellectually active. The efforts of leading Muslims themselves to raise the status of their co-religionists are by no means always received with enthusiasm. In every Arab country, it is still harder to find civil servants of sufficient initiative and ability to take responsible posts among the Muslims than among the men of other faiths, notwithstanding that the former usually outnumber the latter many times over. The modern Arabic press of Cairo, justly hailed as one of the brightest triumphs of native achievement to be found in the present day East, is almost entirely the creation of Christians ; Arab trade and business, where not controlled by Europeans, is frequently in the hands of Jews and Armenians ; and even in politics, the employment of

Muslims is often merely a concession to public opinion. Even so rigid a purist as Ibn Sa'ud has been forced to use Arab Christians as his representatives in outside countries. In art and literature, history, philosophy and even religious discussion, a conspicuous part has always been played in Islam by non-Muslim elements. The imposing façade of democratic government in the more advanced Islamic countries of to-day covers as a rule the direct personal control of an able local tyrant, surrounded by European or American officials ; remove the tyrant and the officials, and the whole thing collapses. Nor is this a new story, or one confined to the modern, degenerate period of Islamic history. Almost from the first, the Arabs left most of the detailed administration of the Empire to Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims. In Egypt, the one Muslim country with a continuous civilised history, the question of the Christian civil servants forms a running comment through the chronicles of all ages ; it is perhaps the only political question which has successively agitated the local public from A.D. 650 or so to the present day. Even in the best days of the Arab Empire the same style of administrative organisation can be seen as that which proved so fatal in later ages ; a ruler with absolutely autocratic powers, surrounded by court sycophants ; provincial rulers whose only duty lies to the ruler and not to the province, and whose conduct is only likely to be called into question if the revenue begins to fall off ; local governors similarly dependent on the provincial tyrant, whose whole ambition is to found a family dynasty and gradually to shake off Caliphal authority ; and finally village or town " shaikhs," ruling the people in the primitive fashion of the tribes, and impervious to all criticism except that of their governing superiors. It is true, of course, that this type of simple organisation was not a Muslim invention, but had been current in the East from time immemorial ; there is no evidence to show, for example, that the empire of Harun ar-Rashid was any worse administered than the empire of Cyrus the Persian. It may be questioned whether, outside Europe, any government except that of modern Japan has ever evolved beyond an administrative form of a somewhat

similar pattern. But the case against the Arabs and the Muslims as a whole is, not that they made worse, but that they did not improve. One of the strangest features of an empire and a civilisation so eminently successful as it was in many respects, was the entire lack of that organising ability associated with ancient Greece, with Rome and with the modern western world. There have been Muslim individual administrators of ability, even of genius, by the score ; but Muslim society has nowhere succeeded in evolving a "ruling class," to back them up and carry on their work. All Muslim empires bear the Napoleonic brand ; fierce activity and brilliant success while the creator is at hand to watch his work, corruption, indifference and decay the moment his back is turned. The impulse towards organisation whereby the fruits of victory may be secured and handed down to later generations, seems entirely lacking. There is noticeable throughout Islamic history a certain lack of grip, a lightness of attention, an attitude amounting almost to puerility in the face of serious material issues, as though the leaders of Muslim life were too engrossed in the affairs of the next world to pay much attention to the daily cares of this one. If this is a reason, it is in strange contrast to the attitude of Muhammad himself, who was before everything else a practical man of affairs, and who in his teaching laid constant stress on the spiritual value of the proper execution of the ordinary duties of life. And, in the humbler walks of life, Islam has faithfully followed him ; probably no equally large community of what are termed in western countries the "working classes" can show such a good record of temperance, happy family life and general contentment within the economic means that life has allowed them. The dignity, the courtesy, the courageous acceptance of the hard blows of life, the sense of humour and the general companionableness of the average, ordinary Arab has often been remarked by western travellers. Islam, in short, seems to offer to the common run of man, a high ideal and a well balanced scheme of life ; its handling of the ordinary virtues is masterly and its hold over the common people remarkable. The "fanaticism" of the Muslim crowd is a commonplace, but fanaticism, after all, is only an

ignorant and misguided manifestation of a deep love for one's faith. It is in its upper classes that Islam has always failed, and seems to continue to fail, to produce a satisfactory standard ; for the educated and the sophisticated its ordered scheme of life becomes boredom, its teachings a commonplace, its ideals a useful plank in a political platform. Hence the failure of all the Islamic empires which, once the first few generations of simple and fanatical soldiers have passed away, seem unable to re-create or to maintain themselves.

Are its failures due to some inherent defect in the religion, or are they the result of some natural deficiency in the peoples who have adopted the faith ? It is difficult to say. It is claimed by many modern Muslim thinkers that Islam is essentially the religion for the modern world, and that its backward position is due to its having evolved principally either among races (like the Persians and Egyptians) who had already seen their best days, or among those too primitive to contribute much to a complicated civilisation. Had, they urge, the clever and energetic people of the West accepted Islam, its supreme value as a religious faith would have been manifest to all. This argument is specious and not entirely convincing. It has this much to be said in its favour : the history of religion shows a great tendency for a faith to adapt itself to its surroundings (compare, for instance, the Christianity of a Balkan country, of Abyssinia and of Scotland), and had Islam established itself in Europe there is little doubt that it would have evolved a new and active local life of its own, just as did Christianity. But the argument overlooks the fact that at least one non-Christian faith, Judaism, has built up for itself out of not too promising material a position of general respect and great strength, in spite of the fact that its proselytising ability has always been poor. Judaism has never failed to turn out a good upper class ; on the contrary, the abilities of educated Jews have constantly earned them positions of trust and privilege even among those who actively disliked them. The failure of Islam as an " upper class " faith is not only noticeable within the body of Muslim communities ; it is characteristic of its relationship

towards whole nations and peoples. At the present day it is still spreading rapidly among the primitive peoples of Asiatic Russia and mid-Africa, sometimes in the teeth of strong Christian opposition ; but it has failed to hold its own, in spite of centuries of opportunity, in the more sophisticated countries of Spain, Sicily and the Balkans. It would seem, then, that there is somewhere an inherent defect in the Islamic structure, a certain levelling and lowering effect, perhaps a slight puerility of outlook, which vitiates its best constructive efforts and makes its progress as a civilising force rapid up to a point and afterwards stationary.

Yet Islam has much to give to the world, just as she has given much in the past. As it can hardly be doubted that some of the finest strains of the Protestant reformation and the renaissance derived from the Muslims of Spain and Sicily, so to-day the plain and severe simplicity of Islamic doctrine and practice may hold a lesson for a world of temples and churches in which the worship of God has become a kind of theatrical entertainment. The ideals of the worship of God directly by men themselves and not through the media of priests, acolytes, the dim hush of great cathedrals and the pagan beauty of boys' voices ; that men are brothers in faith even when unequal in mental capacity or worldly means ; and that God is to be remembered not only at set times, but at business, pleasure or any other occupation of the daily round : are ideals stimulating to a society in which the wrangles of doctrinaires and the quarrels of high priests form the chief religious *motif*. But Islam, too, finds trouble in attempting to realise her ideal. Steeped in reactionary ignorance, fettered by petty regulations and maddening theological hair-splitting, she seems to lack, except in some obscure corners of the earth, most of the fire which steeled the nerves of the heroes of old and gave them faith and courage. Yet she does not lack action which may give hope to those who love the faith. Islam missionary activity still remains unique ; carried out privately and without any of the flourish of trumpets of western Christian bodies, it continues to accomplish the main end in view, at any rate in the less civilised parts of the

world, with complete efficiency and success. At the other extreme, modern Islam is producing thinkers and publicists who are boldly pleading its case in quarters which formerly regarded it as dying or dead. It may be that the marked adaptability which it showed in the past is being stirred once more to life.

Whatever its immediate fate may be, it is certain that a religion which has held the allegiance of large bodies of mankind for thirteen hundred years is not going to disappear without leaving some trace behind. Perhaps the real future of Islam, as of its sister religions, lies in a gradual merging in that wider and more spiritual modern conception of the Deity and His relationship to mankind, which may serve to throw down the barriers of the past and unite all mankind in one great spiritual communion of brothers.

CHAPTER XVI

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE ARABS

AND so we leave the Arab—*vis-à-vis* modern Europe. The shadow of the West has fallen across the Arab's place in the sun. New masters he has—masters of a different civilisation, of a different religious faith, of a different social outlook and training. Yet it would not be accurate to regard them as altogether alien. Perhaps the modern European might even be said to possess more in common with the Arab than the original Ottoman conquerors ; for he shares with him to a large extent the same historical background. In religion the European is as much under the Semitic sway as is the Arab ; to him also the names of Adam, of Noah, of Abraham, Moses and the Messiah are familiar ; in him also mention of famous places in the Arab world stirs an answering note—Damascus, Jerusalem, Mecca, Baghdad, Babylon and “ that great river, the river Euphrates.” Islam, Christianity and Judaism are only variants of the single old Semitic theme ; the progress towards God through the human spirit, rather than through Nature, as in pagan cults, or philosophy, as in China. The Hellenic background of modern Europe is also familiar ground to the Arabs, since their civilisation at its height drew much of its inspiration from Greek models. But the third foundation upon which modern European life is built up—the Roman conception of law—is unfamiliar to the Arab, and possibly incomprehensible by him ; here he parts company definitely with Europe. For the Arab follows the Jew in holding fast to the conception of religious instinct in law ; he chooses to base legality on “ revelation ” rather than on the orderly collection of human experience. It is a measure of the intellectual difference that has divided the Roman from the Carthaginian, the Protestant from the

Catholic and the Oriental Christian, the Indo-European from the Semite throughout history.

And just as Rome conquered Carthage, so now in the fulness of another age modern Europe holds the Arab world in the hollow of her hand. Four powers divide the old Arab Empire between them. But of these four one is not only pre-eminent, but is actually in so powerful a position as practically, so far as their Arab relations are concerned, to control the other three. That one power is Great Britain. The Arabian homeland is at her mercy, for it is she who holds all the gates that matter ; she is the real guardian of the holy places, and it is by her grace and usually in her ships that Muslim pilgrims come from all over the earth to perform the time-honoured ceremonies that have made Mecca a symbol in every tongue of devotional ambition. It is by arrangement with her, and by virtue of her tacit approval, that France holds Syria ; without her support the Zionist ambitions in Palestine must soon reveal their hollowness. The uncertain thrones of Irak and Egypt lean on her strong arm ; at her nod the Wahabi hosts confine themselves within limits which, had they only the Turks to deal with, might have been exceeded long since. True, as we move towards the perimeter of the Arab world, the influence of England apparently lessens ; but the decline is more apparent than real. Not only is Britain mistress of the Mediterranean, which means that the communications of France, Italy and Spain with their North African colonies are practically at her mercy, but she has strong local affiliations, particularly in the commercial sphere. Moreover she has in the past held in various parts of North Africa particularly Tunis and Morocco, a powerful political position, which she has resigned not through compulsion but by friendly arrangement. But for the Anglo-French entente of pre-war days it is, to say the least, doubtful whether the French occupation of Morocco would have become possible ; and Italy's conquest of Tripoli was facilitated considerably by the friendly offices of the British controllers of Egypt.¹ Nothing, perhaps, revealed in

¹ Although Egypt was still legally a part of the Turkish Empire, and as such bound to support the Sultan-Caliph in war, she was compelled by the

whose hands lay the trump cards more than the Anglo-French Pact of 1904 ; France needed British support urgently, as the Algeiras clash showed, but Britain had held her own in Egypt in spite of strong French opposition for three decades, and though the cessation of that opposition was convenient, it was not vital. The events of the war and the subsequent peace have but tended to emphasize what the developments of pre-war days were gradually making clear ; the nominal unity of the Arab world under Ottoman control has given place to a nominal division under four European powers ; but the strings finally lead into the hands of only one of them. The British have succeeded to the Arab and Turkish Caliphates as they succeeded earlier to the empires of the Moguls and the Mahrattas ; it is the King of England who sits to-day on the throne of Harun ar-Rashid and Suleiman the Magnificent.

And this succession of England to the Caliphal line has introduced an entirely unprecedented political situation in the Arab world. Britain is an " infidel "—that is to say, a non-Muslim Power ; and she is in addition a Power with vast interests right outside the domains of Islam. Her English-speaking colonies are now so important as to hold the status of practically independent countries ; did these alone constitute the British Empire, it would still be the most imposing imperial edifice of the modern world. But Britain is also the motherland and cultural home of the United States, the greatest single power of the day ; in the east her King is Emperor of India, master of a stretch of territory in Asia which has never before been united under one ruler ; her African interests commit her to the charge of the largest negro population in the world ; and her control of strategic points on the Pacific give her a position in the Far East equalled only by the United States and Japan. Lastly, her sea power, expressed not only in terms of a vast Navy, but of an extraordinarily highly developed chain of strategic islands and " coaling stations," and of a mercantile marine which literally serves the world, is so formidable as to make her a first-class power did she

British authorities to declare her neutrality ; this action had an important effect on the campaign, for it deprived Turkey of her only all-land route to the front, and placed her communications at the mercy of the Italian navy.

actually possess no continental territory whatever. In the Ottoman Empire the Arab lands could boast, perhaps, no very high status ; but such as it was, it was a good deal more respectable than that represented by comparison with the world-wide interests of the British. The Turks were fellow-Muslims ; the possession of the Arab lands, containing as they did the holy cities and the imperishable memories of the early struggles of the faith, conferred upon the Sultan-Caliph a real prestige which made the Arab connection of some political value. In the earlier days, too, of the Ottoman Empire the Mediterranean still possessed value as a trade-route, and control of the Arab countries meant in practice control of that sea as well. But to Great Britain Arab affairs have from the very first formed merely a comparatively insignificant part of a much greater whole. It is merely as a stepping stone to India and the East that the Arab world comes into the British scheme of things. The seizure of Aden, the gradual control of the Persian Gulf, the nineteenth century activity in Irak, the purchase of the Suez Canal shares, the occupation of Egypt and finally the great war settlements have all been stages in the penetration of greater Arabia by the British, not because of any intrinsically desirable or valuable prize therein, not because its domination as such was especially desired, but because the Power that held India was bound to take steps to secure her communications with the East.

Thus a certain element of tragedy underlies the political relations of the two races. The control of Arabian affairs by Britain is to the Arabs a vital matter, entering in some degree into every detail of their daily lives ; to the British it is merely an incident of world empire, conveying except to experts little but a certain romantic feeling of pride and satisfaction, sometimes (as in the case of the Zionists) lavished in directions inimical to Arab progress. What happens in Palestine or Irak means little to the British public accustomed to associate itself with important happenings in every corner of the globe ; but it may mean everything to the Arabs living on the spot. The British can afford to treat Arab affairs at their leisure, to treat them even with indifference or levity ; but to the Arabs they must remain

the most important things on earth. The poise in the relations between two such unequal participants must always be a delicate one, which is one reason why Anglo-Arab affairs will need for some time to come very careful handling, if tragedy is to be avoided.

Is the present intimate nature of these relations a permanent feature of world politics, or merely temporary? So far as anything in the Middle East may be termed permanent, it would seem to be. "The *Ingiliz*," say the Arabs of Irak, "never do anything for nothing"; or, in other words, Great Britain is always assumed to have an object behind what seems to be at times rather aimless and drifting policy. But if it was important for Britain a century ago to secure her Arab communications, it is surely doubly important now that the aeroplane and the motor car have restored to the Arab lands that value as a trade-route to the East of which the discovery of the Cape route robbed them. For many years now the Suez Canal and the Red Sea have surpassed the Cape in the quantity of eastern traffic passing through them; and the opening up of aerial and automobile routes throws the balance even more strongly down on the Arab side. All these new routes, as well as the Suez Canal, remain under the practical control of Great Britain so long as she retains her predominant position in the Arab world, for the simple reason that they must all cross Arab territory at some point. It would be unwise, therefore, to assume that the present linking of British and Arab destiny is likely to be easily or lightly snapped. The inevitability of this close connection, though slightly deprecated in British circles to-day, was quite clearly seen by British administrators of a hundred years ago. The directors of the East India Company negotiated two mail routes through Arab territory, one via the Red Sea and Egypt (there being then no Canal), and the other via Basrah and the Euphrates. It was under the Company's direction that the Persian Gulf was mapped and buoyed, and the rivers of Irak surveyed; an Englishman (Col. Chesney) was the first man to navigate a steamer on the Euphrates, and, incidentally, the originator of the Suez Canal scheme as well. The occupation of Aden was part

of the same shrewd policy ; Muhammad Ali recognised the drift of this at once, and it formed his principal reason for so stoutly opposing the Canal. His opposition is understandable ; but it is strange to find the British Government in agreement with him, for once, on this point. Not only did Lord Palmerston refuse his support to the French group which took up the Canal project (by the giving of which support British control could have been assured from the first), but he actually opposed it so systematically at Constantinople that the future of the scheme was seriously jeopardised. Even the later clever move by which Disraeli obtained for Britain an assured position in the Company met with severe opposition in high quarters. And although Britain, by her occupation of Egypt in the Arabi Pasha revolt, accepted by inference the responsibilities of her new position, she failed for many years to realise the full significance of the move, to the serious embarrassment of her representatives on the spot. The growing international competition of the twentieth century forced her to take stock of her position, and the Anglo-French Pact of 1904 and the Lansdowne Declaration of 1906 seemed to show that she was awakening to her Arab responsibilities ; but the post-war period showed the same hesitation, the same unwillingness to come to grip with facts, the same failure to visualise the Arab problem as a whole. When, for instance, the evacuation of Irak in 1923 could find defenders of the calibre of Lord Oxford ; when the policy of " cutting the painter " with regard to Anglo-Arab affairs could be urged as practical politics by important groups of newspapers, it might seem that the British public were still but little in advance of Lord Palmerston in their Near Eastern political views, and several decades behind Disraeli.

Thus the connection may be said to have come into being on the British side not only without deliberate plan or design, but actually in spite of sincere and considerable efforts to avoid what was regarded in the light of a new and awkward entanglement. On the Arab side there has been, for different reasons, the same desire to escape from the entanglement, but perhaps rather more clear-sightedness in foreseeing its inevitability. Ever since the time of

Muhammad Ali, educated Arabs have realised that, unless some sort of a miracle overtook the somnolent Ottoman Empire, some kind of European control of the Arab lands was bound to come. And Britain's activity in the Gulf and Irak, her occupation of Aden and later of Egypt, and her known position in India obviously suggested, in spite of the strong French influence in Syria and (to a lesser degree) in Irak, the identity of the power who would be likely to exercise the control. In some quarters, though by no means in all, European intervention was welcomed, as tending to help the Arab nation out of the *impasse* into which three centuries of Ottoman rule had brought it. The later arrival on the scene of Germany, Russia and Italy suggested profitable possibilities in the way of playing off Europe against itself. But the most sanguine among the Arabs never hoped to avoid European control altogether ; the most that they hoped for was that, when it came, it might prove reasonably amenable to Arab pressure and agreeable to Arab progress.

Has the Arab, then, gained or lost by the added closeness of the British connection ? In the material sense, he has undoubtedly gained. Even allowing for the fact that, politically speaking, he has not got all that he hoped for, he has gained two inestimable advantages : freedom from the old false situation under which his nominal ruling power, Turkey, was herself ruled by half a dozen other powers ; and the establishment of direct touch with the most advanced and progressive portions of mankind. Since the war the old remoteness of the Arab countries, the vast and difficult distances that divided town from town, are no more. New railways, air routes and automobile services link the cities ; lorry and light car are now as common on the desert as the camel himself. Baghdad has been brought to the Mediterranean, and Egypt joined to Syria by rail. The North African oases are now as open to the world of pleasure as the Riviera or the Pyrenees. The Meccan pilgrim takes a car from Jiddah to the holy city, and the pious Shiah does his round of the holy shrines of Irak in an omnibus. Cairo and Beirut have become the terminals for great road and rail routes covering half Africa and Asia ;

Haifa dreams of cross-desert railways and pipe lines which may make her one of the great oil ports of the world. Ibn Sa'ud himself, prince of the fundamentalists, has forsaken the camel for the automobile, and sees possibilities of uniting his scattered dominions more effectively by means of aeroplanes and armoured cars.

In the political sphere the Arab has gained less. A cynic, perhaps, might even suggest that the muddle which the Allies created in the Arab lands by their post-war settlement outweighs the good their conquest brought about in non-political ways. Even commercial development has, it must be admitted, been seriously affected by political issues. The oil question, the passport nuisance, the varying currencies, official languages, import and export duties are all of them, if not political in origin, deeply influenced by political considerations. It is easy to sympathise with the vexation of the Arab commercial man who, having been brought up under the Turkish Empire in which free progress for men and goods between the various Arab cities was interrupted only by brigands, now finds across his path a variety of boundaries and frontiers which might even tax the patience of the Balkans. Unfortunately the resulting complication does not stop at passports, weights and measures ; it pervades the whole atmosphere of the various administrations, which differ radically from each other in organisation, in method and even in aim. Democratic government, for example, has been actively encouraged by the British in Irak ; it had been as actively discouraged by the same British in Palestine. Little minor differences, entering into the very core of daily life, reflect the national idiosyncrasies of the occupying powers. Police regulations vary from country to country, at the whims of the occupying power. In Irak a passport is not necessary for a native, unless he wishes to travel abroad ; in Syria every native must obtain and carry everywhere a *carte d'identité*. Even the major policy of the powers varies from State to State ; in Syria and Palestine the "mandatory power" is constantly *en evidence*, and the French and British flags are flown ; in Irak the very word "mandate" is considered bad form, and the national flag

(a variety of that of the Sharifian Arabs in the Hijaz) is flown. In Syria and Palestine the Arab is snubbed, and where possible ignored; in Irak he is encouraged to regard himself as the social equal of the resident European. In Syria and Palestine the European officials tend to form a class apart; many speak Arabic only perfunctorily and in Syria not infrequently refuse to speak it at all. In Irak and Trans-Jordania, as in Egypt, the British officials appear disguised as local inhabitants, sometimes pashas or beys, wearing when in uniform the national headgear, making a careful study of local etiquette, conducting their offices in Arabic, and at times showing more zeal on behalf of Arab affairs than the Arab himself. Is it surprising that the Arab is sometimes puzzled by this entire lack of co-ordination of plan and idea? A uniform system of control, even when badly applied as in the case of Turkey, is at least comprehensible; you may not love it, but you can soon settle down to its workings. But a system of administration which varies from place to place even when the Power at the head of affairs is identical must necessarily cause both confusion and surprise. When next we blame the Arab for the "ingratitude" with which he is said to receive the blessings of European efficiency, let us at least ask ourselves if that efficiency is quite as carefully applied as we have been led to believe.

How, then, does the Arab stand to-day with regard to the immediate future which has been opened up in front of him by the war? Granted that he may be said to have gained in certain ways by the post-war settlements and lost in others, and assuming that the settlements themselves will hold the field for some time to come, how is he to go to work with a view to gaining that place in the sun which (seeing that his ambitions are confined to what is after all his own part of the world) seems hardly an unreasonable aim? What, if any, policy is he evolving to meet the new times, and how far is he prepared to go in order to fit himself to play a part in them?

There are, roughly speaking, three schools of thought to be met with in the Arab lands to-day. The first is that which we have termed the fundamentalist; it teaches that

only by a strict and rigid adherence to the doctrines of Islam can the Arab hope to succeed, and that any truckling to the "infidel" is both in itself evil and bad policy. The leading example of this school is offered by the Wahabis. The development of their power in Arabia itself has been amazingly complete, and they are led by the man who is without question the greatest Arab of his generation; Abdul Aziz bin Abdur Rahman Ibn Sa'ud, King of Najd and the Hijaz.¹ But such an outlook, fine and strong and effective as it may be in a primitive society, possesses obvious weaknesses in the case of that society stepping outside its own area and pitting itself against the world. The Wahabi administration has certainly proved its worth in Arabia, but the success of its application to the more advanced Arab countries would be, to say the least, extremely doubtful. No doubt Ibn Sa'ud himself, being a born administrator, could, if he had the chance, rule Irak or Syria as capably as he rules, say, the Hasa; but he would of necessity be compelled to make use of different methods. It is difficult to see, therefore, that fundamentalism as an idea, notwithstanding the fact that it has produced the greatest single Arab State of modern times, has anything to contribute to the future of Arab politics. It is along less violent, less puritanical and less reactionary paths that the Arabs must advance, if they are to learn to fit themselves for what the future may bring them. The Wahabi creed is a sincere and not ineffective effort at reformation, but it does not go far enough; it is right in going back to the Prophet, but wrong in insisting on the letter instead of the spirit of the law. If the present Ibn Sa'ud could have been matched with a new and greater Ibn Abdul Wahab, then the *nahdah* or renaissance might truly have been complete. Lacking a mate to give his political work a spiritual covering, Ibn Sa'ud will probably have to content himself with the position he has made for himself; prince of the puritans and master of the greatest area of desert in the world.

The second school of thought goes to the opposite

¹ For the present-day Wahabi State and its life, see: Amin Rihani, "Ibn Sa'ud of Arabia," London, 1928; J. Harrison, "The Arab at Home," New York, 1923; H. St. J. Philby, "Arabia of the Wahabis," London, 1928.

extreme. It is the opportunist, as opposed to the fundamentalist. It urges that it is useless for a weak and disunited people to attempt to pit themselves against the will of almighty Europe, and that the only sane thing for an Arab to do is to learn to play the European game, fit himself to take an individual place in the team, and seize such opportunities of personal glory or gain as the association with Europeans may offer to him. This type of thought is the native complement to the French policy in Algeria and Tunis, of de-arabizing the Arab and turning him into a kind of bastard Frenchman. In the West it is a possible (though probably undesirable) policy, because the Arab in Africa is seldom more than a minority of the population ; in Syria, where it has been tentatively tried, recent events seem to show that it is doomed to failure. Another variation of the same idea (from the Arab point of view) is the voluntary sinking of national ideals in the new local nationalism of particular provinces. This programme is to be seen most clearly in Egypt, where the cry is not " united Arabia " but " Egypt for the Egyptians " ; it is represented, too, in the bodies of Young Algerians, Young Tunisians and so on in the West, and is popular with a certain section of native opinion in Irak, where the cultivation of Iraki nationalism rather than Arab racialism finds keen supporters both in government circles and in the press. It is a modern form of that Arab love for " particularism " which has been throughout such a troublesome characteristic of the Arab's political psychology. It is an outlook which is destructible of the best national interests, because it encourages jealousy and dislike between the inhabitants of the various provinces, even when they are of Arab blood ; the constant anti-Syrian agitation in Egypt (based on economic grounds, owing to the tendency of the sharper and better educated Syrian to gravitate towards Egypt's best jobs), and the persistent though less prominent anti-Syrian feeling in Irak (sometimes applied also to the Hijazi followers of the King), are conspicuous examples of this. The particularists, it need hardly be said, lend themselves admirably to exploitation by the controlling Powers.

The third school is the most careful and deliberate, as

well as the most patriotic of the three. It looks towards the long past of the Arab, marks the striking way in which he has survived other conquests and calamities, retains faith in his survival power, and aims at a quiet, persistent and deliberate elimination of the political faults and blunders which continue to prejudice the Arab cause and keep the race in a position of definite inferiority. This school looks round for a common platform on which to rally all the Arabs, and finds it, not in religion as in the past, but in race. Religion, its leaders point out, has never in history been able to offer more than a superficial and transitory unity at best ; for the simple reason that religion depends at bottom upon individual feeling or opinion, and this must obviously be infinitely variable. Hence all religions tend soon after birth to break up into a large number of little groups which, far from even wishing to retain an appearance of unity, soon from the very nature of religious belief regard each other with the most fierce hostility. Race on the other hand (so they teach) has been shown by the history of modern Europe to offer a real and lasting bond, since it is intimately connected with the factors of common language, similar habits, customs and interests, and common physical type. Once instil into the Arab the idea that a brother Arab, be he Muslim, Christian, Jew or Druse, is to be respected and loved as a blood-brother, once place nationality on the pedestal that religion has occupied so long, and you automatically solve the problems of the Arabs in the main, by removing the factions and minorities which, even in the good old days, prevented the race effectively acting as a whole. If a country like the United States, argue these Arab thinkers, can instil into a population of extraordinarily heterogeneous origins a sense of unity and nationality by the mere force of a common language and a common culture, cannot the Arabs, who are merely divided among themselves by religious and tribal sentiments, and not at all by blood or speech, achieve a similar unity ? Such an idea, of course, cuts right across the traditional allegiance to Islam ; but religious loyalty, add these thinkers, is a spiritual ideal and has nothing to do with modern politics ; a persistent clinging to political Islam will merely drive the Arabs the

way of the Holy Roman Empire and other similar institutions. Thus these Arabs definitely reject the old pan-Islamic ideas which formed the basis of Sultan Abdul Hamid's policy, and which still attract Indian Muslims and led, in 1927, to the twin congresses of Cairo and Mecca. These Young Arabs would follow the Young Turks rather than the Senussis or the Wahabis ; Mustafa Kemal Pasha is their ideal in a leader rather than, say, Ibn Sa'ud. For immediate direction they tend still to group themselves round the Sharifian house, in spite of the misfortunes which have overtaken it of late ; on Faisal in particular, and on Irak, they pin their hopes. They recognise that it is hopeless to expect to counteract the French and Zionist influence without a proved weapon ; modern life is essentially realistic, and to prove to the world that the Arabs are fit to rule, you must show them a picture of Arabs ruling. And Irak, alone of the mandated States, has already achieved a certain measure of independence ; should its now hopeful prospects not belie themselves, you gain an excellent base for opposing the French position in Syria and for coming to some arrangement with the Zionists (for Irak, too, has its quota of powerful Jews), on the basis of the pooling of common aims and the elimination of rival ambitions. By attracting to themselves the Arab Jew and gradually "freezing out" the foreigner, these Arabs would hope to add Syria and Palestine to a united Arabia, united by bonds of blood and speech instead of by bonds of religion, and ready to follow in the footsteps of the Greeks, the Italians and the Germans of the nineteenth century.¹

It is an attractive and a splendid picture ; but is it practical ? Will you ever persuade the common Arab to desert the standard of his beloved faith and open his heart to "infidels," even though they be of his own race ? And how about the many vested interests, the old traditions and ideals, nay, even certain of the direct commands of religion, which must be overthrown by the shifting of allegiances ? These Young Arabs have a heavy programme before them ;

¹ It is noteworthy that King Faisal himself has always shown a sympathetic attitude towards the Jews. In the summer of 1925, when on a visit to England, His Majesty occupied the London residence of a well-known Baghdad Jewish family domiciled in Great Britain.

but at least there are certain things to be said in their favour. Their ideas have been tried in Turkey and Persia, and have not been found wanting. They do offer a definite, practical basis for the focusing of Arab racial ambition. They are in accordance with plans which have fired the visions of those who have loved the Arabs, both native patriots and foreigners ; men and women like Miss Bell, Colonel Lawrence, Amin Rihani and the daring leader of the last Damascus revolt, Dr. Shabandar. They point to a constructive future, though the road they indicate has terrible difficulties ; but fear is a great solvent of old political obstacles, and fear is an ever-present feature with the post-war Arabs ; fear of a permanent European domination. And the two alternatives : the severe unity of the Wahabis, impracticable in a world accustomed to freedom ; or a deliberate severance of racial bonds in favour of new provincial allegiances, or of a second-rate Europeanism—seem not to offer much. It may prove an impossible task to eliminate the age-old barriers of faith and to substitute a new loyalty of race, but it would seem to be a task eminently worth attempting ; at the worst it would help the Arabs along that path of self-realisation which is their greatest need. It was once thought impossible to end the chronic disunion of Italy, or to persuade the petty, bickering kingdoms of Germany to join hands for greater ends. The day on which the inhabitant of Arabia, Irak or Syria could declare with his whole heart, " I am an Arab " rather than " I am a Muslim, Christian or Jew," would mark a revolution such as the Arabs have not known since the Prophet came to unite a number of small and insignificant pastoral tribes, and forge out of the union a mighty, imperial people.

So much for the Arab side of the question. What now of the British—since we are agreed that it is in British hands that the immediate destinies of the Arabs lie, and to Britain that they must look for help and recognition if they are to realise their legitimate political hopes. How does the problem look from the British side ? Is it possible for

Britain to help the Arabs towards their place in the sun without prejudicing British interests or policies ?

Let us first consider Britain's needs in the Arab lands. They are broadly speaking twofold ; the protection of her communications with India and the Far East, and the safeguarding of her oil supplies in Persia and Irak. Whatever happens, Britain is bound to obtain and to hold guarantees that the Suez Canal and the land and air routes of Syria and Irak are not only open at all times to her ships, aeroplanes and automobiles, but closed if she requires it against those of her enemies. It is also essential to her to guard against any artificial check on the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to India and Europe. These two would seem to be her only essential interests ; others she certainly has, but they are rather sentimental than practical. She is bound, for instance, to ensure the free and unmolested passage of her millions of Muslim subjects to the holy cities ; she is equally bound to accept responsibility for the minorities, such as that of the Zionist Jews, which her own policy has brought to the Arab lands. And she is generally responsible for the safety of her own subjects permanently residing or trading among the Arabs, just as she would be in any other part of the world. None of these interests seem to be seriously challenged by the idea of a united Arab State. Britain has constantly repudiated any wish to colonise the Arab countries ; and she has every interest in avoiding unnecessary responsibility if she can be sure that her own immediate objects are being safeguarded. Any political ideal which might serve to keep the Arabs quiet and contented ought, it would seem, to meet with British approbation. There would have to be, of course, some readjustment of view-point on the British side. The policy of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds which has formed the main plank in the British programme for the Arab countries since the war would have to be changed for something a little less crude and more statesmanlike. If you place various forces together in a confined space and encourage conflicting activities in them, the chances are that you will gain, sooner or later, a violent explosion. It may be possible to turn Syria into an overseas department of

France ; it may be possible by building up an independent Arab State in Irak to place Arab ambitions on a firm footing ; it may be possible to re-build the kingdoms of Judea and Israel ; but it is certainly not possible to do all these things at one and the same time and in one and the same confined and limited portion of the earth's surface. Sooner or later the British Government will have to decide to back one horse and one only ; the Arab political course is narrow and difficult, and there is no room in the field for rival favourites.

Which horse seems to offer Britain the best run for her money ? Laying all idealism aside, which of the rivals seems in a position to offer Britain the best protection for her own selfish interests ; France, Zion or the native ? France is an independent Power, both mindful and deeply resentful of the position of comparative inferiority in the Arab world in which the events of the past twenty-five years have placed her ; it is not altogether clear that she could be relied upon in an emergency to see eye to eye with her British competitors. The Zionists are engaged in a desperate attempt to make the best of both worlds, to secure for the Jew a homeland without sacrificing the privileged international position which has grown out of the Second Dispersion ; but internationalism is a dangerous weapon, and Britain may well think twice before she trusts it too far. The native is poor, uneducated, backward, suspicious, fanatical and difficult to handle ; but he is in his own land, and he knows it and its people. Perhaps he may be able to offer less immediate promise than the French or the Zionists, but his promises may have more permanent results. The native is a permanent fixture ; you may make friends with him or you may antagonise him, but he will always be there. Twenty years ago there were neither French nor Zionists in the Arab lands, nor can it be prophesied with absolute certainty that there will be any in twenty years' time. But the Arab is there now as he has been a thousand years and more, as he probably will be, humanly speaking, for ever. If Britain's interests are likely to tie her permanently to one portion or another of the Arab world, would it not seem the safest as well as the most

enlightened policy to cultivate the friendship of the inhabitants of that world, rather than that of outsiders ?

It may be urged that much of this represents an argument for lost causes. The French are already established in Syria, and the Zionists have been officially promised the support of the British Government for their Palestine policy ; even granted that past British policy has been mistaken and perhaps inequitable in bringing these things to pass, the mischief is done now. That is perfectly true. But the British attitude will make a very great deal of difference if and when the mischief comes to be undone. There has been recently a fair amount of evidence to show that French policy in Syria is changing ; the French are political realists, and having found that Arab nationalism is a reality, they are beginning to adapt their own policy to it. There have not been wanting signs also that the more acute among the Zionists have begun to feel the heavy, if slow-moving, force of native opinion, and are preparing, even at a certain amount of self-sacrifice, to meet it. Should the events of the next decade lead to a definite *rapprochement* on both sides, in which the reality of the real essential unity of the Arab countries might be generally recognised, the attitude of the British Government and people would make all the difference, since it is Britain who holds the reins. By her favour she could enormously accelerate the process of re-uniting the Arab lands severed by the peace settlements, and on the other hand her opposition, open or covert, might wreck the scheme for generations.

And in the meanwhile it is with the British people rather than the British Government that the possibility and the responsibility of aiding a great but backward people rest. For a necessary preliminary to the evolution of a definite Arab policy on the part of the British Government is the cultivation of a greater interest in Arab affairs by the British public. Hitherto the Arab world has been largely, from the British point of view, the happy hunting ground of the official and the expert. That is not a healthy state of things. The British officials in the various Arab countries form a very fine body of men—perhaps the finest body of men of that type in the world ; but it is neither fair nor wise

to leave the whole task to them. In a democratic empire it is the duty of every thoughtful citizen to be in touch, so far as his time allows, with the doings of his Government overseas, and particularly where such doings concern weaker or more backward races whose immediate destiny lies in his country's keeping. The path, it is true, has not in the past been made very easy for the British public ; the British press is hardly at its best in dealing with Near Eastern affairs, and the channels of information have not been always free from the suspicion of lack of detail, of partiality and of direct official interference. Moreover travel over much of the Arab world is still difficult and, except to those who have a taste for native life, apt to be tedious. Few of the real beauty spots in the Arab countries are as well known as they deserve to be ; others with far less real attractions are glaringly over-advertised. The Europeanised tourist quarters which have sprung up of late years in some of the cities have the unfortunate effect of segregating the visitor and hiding the real life of the country from him almost as effectively as if he stopped at home. The same unfortunate result is to be seen in much of the popular literature dealing with Arab countries, which creates the same sort of false impression that the romantic novel of Society gives of life in the West End of London. But where public ignorance overflows into the political sphere, the results are likely to be dangerous ; it is generally admitted, for example, that many of the Egyptian troubles of the past two decades could have been rendered far less delicate had the points at issue been fully understood by the British people at home.

Some such increase of knowledge and sympathetic understanding is, it would seem, a *sine qua non* of future progress in the Arab lands. On this score the Arabs themselves have no illusions ; witness their increasingly frequent, and sometimes rather pathetic attempts to secure more " publicity " in the press both of Great Britain and of the United States. The present day Arab has been given the choice by Fate of affiliation to a Latin or an Anglo-Saxon civilisation ; with the aid of one or the other he seeks to struggle towards the light. There is little doubt where his

choice would lie, but it is unfair to expect him to make it without the offer of some sympathy, some appreciation of his difficulties, some reasoned help and understanding. If the Anglo-Arab future is to be a real thing, if the ancient lands of the Arab East are to march forward to peace and prosperity under the British ægis, then an effort of thought and leadership is called for from the senior partner in the firm. The material reward should be a great one ; far greater will be that increase of power and vision which sees the British Empire as a vast army of many nations and cultures sweeping up the varied civilisations of the past in the march forward to that ideal world of brothers which must, under Heaven, form the limit of human desire.

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